

# 2d artist

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119

Issue 119 | November 2015

## Create a dynamic exosuit scene

Learn how to create a sci-fi mech and pilot character

## plus

- 10 of the best digital images
- **Embellished anatomy**
  - Painting an experimental scene
- **and much more!**



# Editor's Letter



**ANNIE MOSS**  
Junior Editor

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## Welcome to 2dartist issue 119!

Welcome to issue 119 of 2dartist magazine! This month features a speed paint tutorial by Donglu Yu on creating an historic landscape in only two hours, a tutorial on digital painting in the style of Peter Paul Rubens, and Ignacio Lazcano and Juan Novelletto show how to design a robot exosuit and then use it in a dynamic sci-fi scene.

Also in this issue are interviews with Efflam Mercier and Fernando Acosta, and another 10 inspiring Gallery images. Traditional artist Nunzio Paci showcases his nature and anatomy inspired paintings, and concept designer Daniel Gish lets us take a look inside his sketchbook. Don't forget to check out the new competition we are running on page 75 too. Enjoy!

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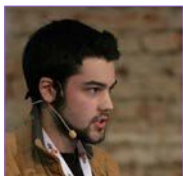
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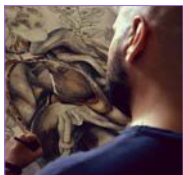
### EFFLAM MERCIER

Efflam Mercier is a freelance concept designer and illustrator from France. He focuses on mood and lighting, using a wide range of tools to explore the possibilities of visual storytelling.



### FERNANDO ACOSTA

Fernando Acosta is a senior concept artist based in Vancouver, Canada. He has worked on a number of game and film projects and currently works remotely for WB Games, Montreal.



### NUNZIO PACI

Nunzio Paci is a visual artist based in Bologna, Italy. He currently exhibits his work, which deals with the relationship between man and nature, in particular animals and plants, across the world.



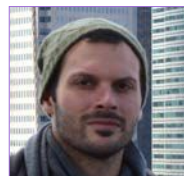
### DANIEL GISH

Daniel Gish has been drawing ever since he can remember, and was inspired by sci-fi movies to be a concept designer. He is currently a freelance concept and graphic designer.



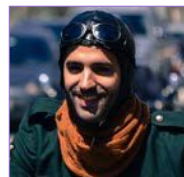
### CATHERINE STEUER

Catherine Steuer is a freelance digital illustrator based in France. After graduating from a degree in Graphic Design she decided to make a living from her painting skills and started to work independently.



### JUAN NOVELLETTO

Juan Novelletto is from Buenos Aires, Argentina, and is a senior concept artist at NGD Studios and art director at indie games studio Nastycloud. He focuses on concepts, matte painting and illustrating for videogames.



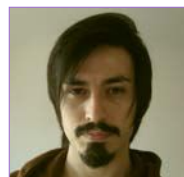
### IGNACIO BAZÁN LAZCANO

Ignacio Bazán Lazcano, from Buenos Aires, Argentina, is art director at NGD Studios. He is also a concept artist for Legendary entertainment. He demonstrates how to design a sci-fi exosuit from a basic shape.



### DONGLU YU

Donglu Yu is a senior concept artist working at Warner Brothers Games Montreal. She has worked on many games, including Assassin's Creed, Far Cry 4 and Deus Ex: Human Revolution.



### DOUG LOBO

Doug Lobo is a Brazilian visual artist who currently delivers artwork for tales magazines and fantasy literature book publishers as a freelancer, developing his visions through digital media.



### JOSÉ JULIÁN LONDOÑO CALLE

José is a concept artist and matte painter who lectures in design. His projects include work for Xbox One and PS4, and educational videogames for the Ministry of Education, Colombia.



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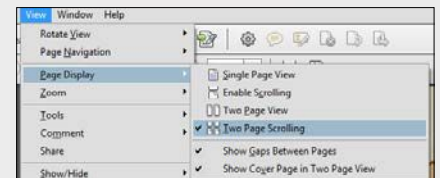
If you're having problems viewing the double-page spreads that we feature within this magazine, then follow this handy little guide on how to set up your PDF reader!

## Top tips for viewing

For optimum viewing of the magazine, it is recommended that you have the latest version of Adobe Acrobat Reader installed. You can download it for free here: [DOWNLOAD](#)

To view the many double-page spreads featured in 2dartist magazine, you can set the reader to display "two-up", which will show double-page spreads as one large landscape image:

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## Jump to articles

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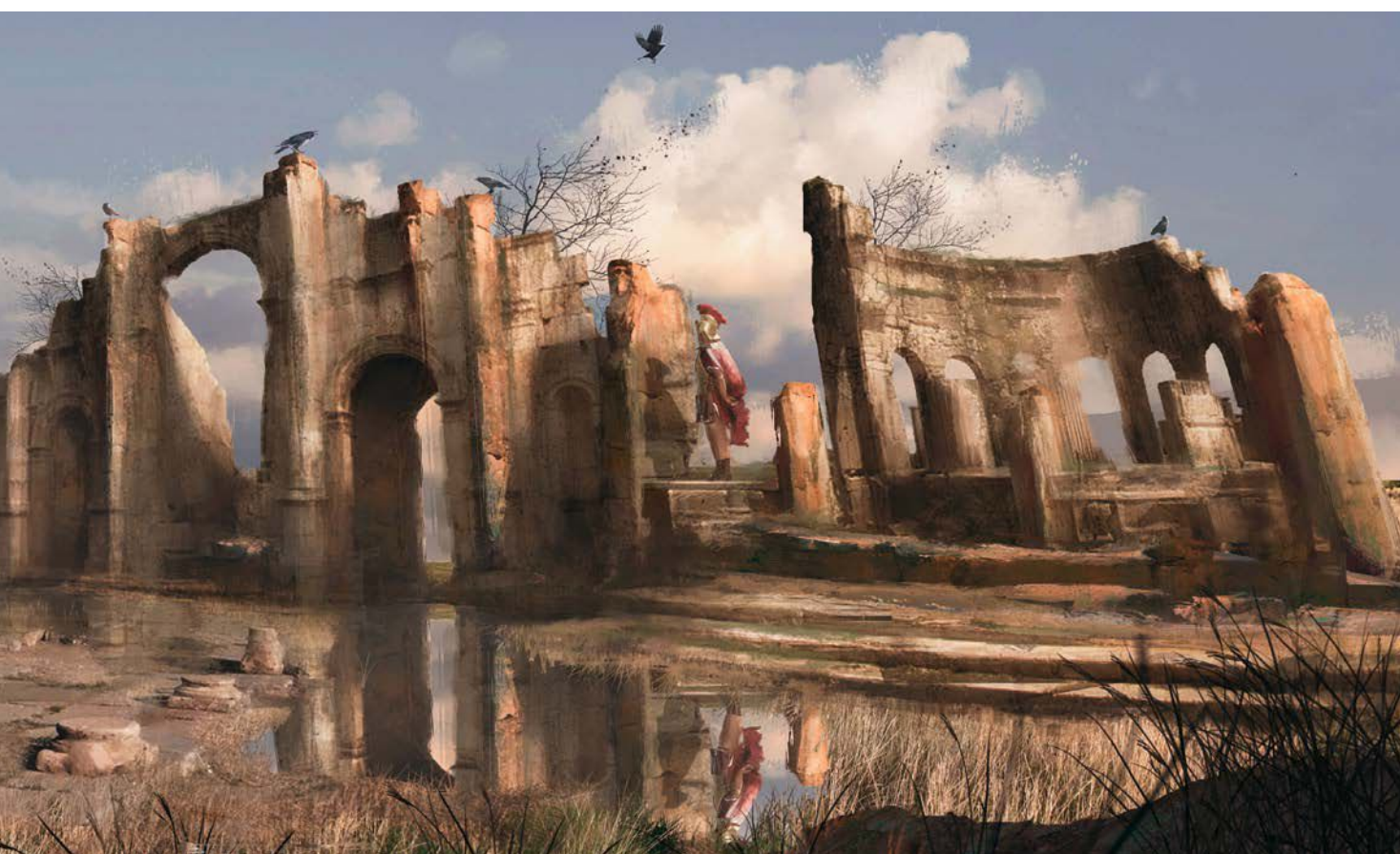
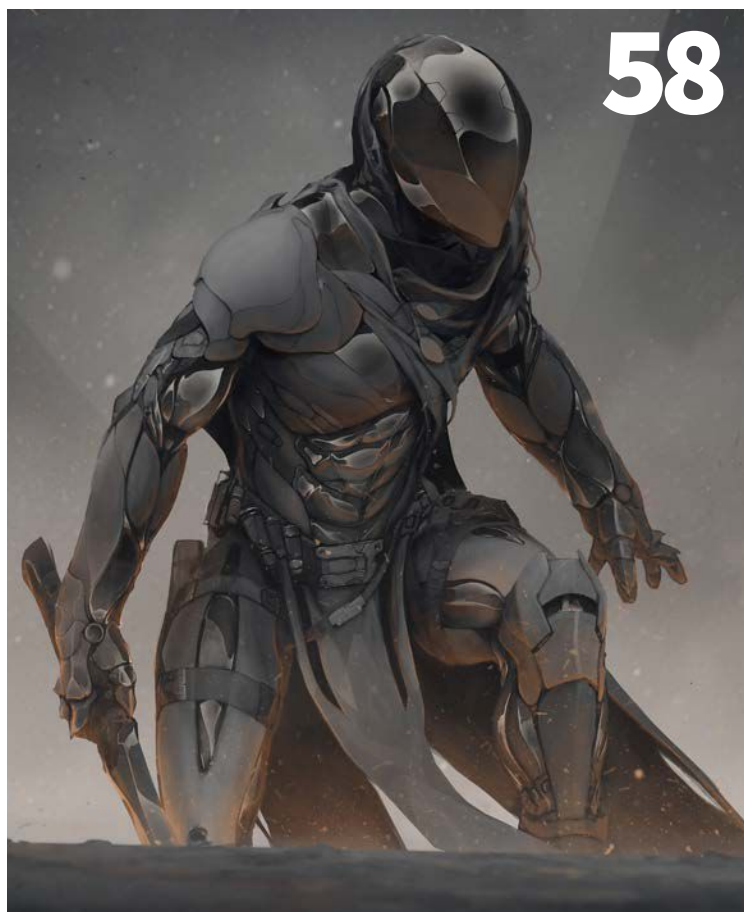


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## The Artist



**Efflam Mercier**  
efflammercier.com

**Interviewed by:**  
Annie Moss

Efflam Mercier is a freelance concept designer and illustrator from France. He focuses on mood and lighting, using a wide range of tools to explore the possibilities of visual storytelling.

# Emphasizing visual storytelling

Freelance illustrator Efflam Mercier discusses why it is important to maintain story details in concept art ▶









Freelance illustrator and concept artist Efflam Mercier has not been in the digital art scene long, but he is already making an impression with his work. Beginning his career as a matte painter, Efflam has explored a wide variety of both 2D and 3D software, developing and diversifying his skills. By taking a problem-solving approach to his work, Efflam has been able to tackle projects for film, videogames and advertisements, and he has recently completed set designs for the new *Iron Sky: The Coming Race* film. Above all else, Efflam is most interested in maintaining narratives in his work; ensuring that he tells a story through the lighting, color, prop choices and character details.

With a busy future ahead of him, we catch up with Efflam to find out more about his process, the challenges of working in the digital art world and life as a freelance artist...

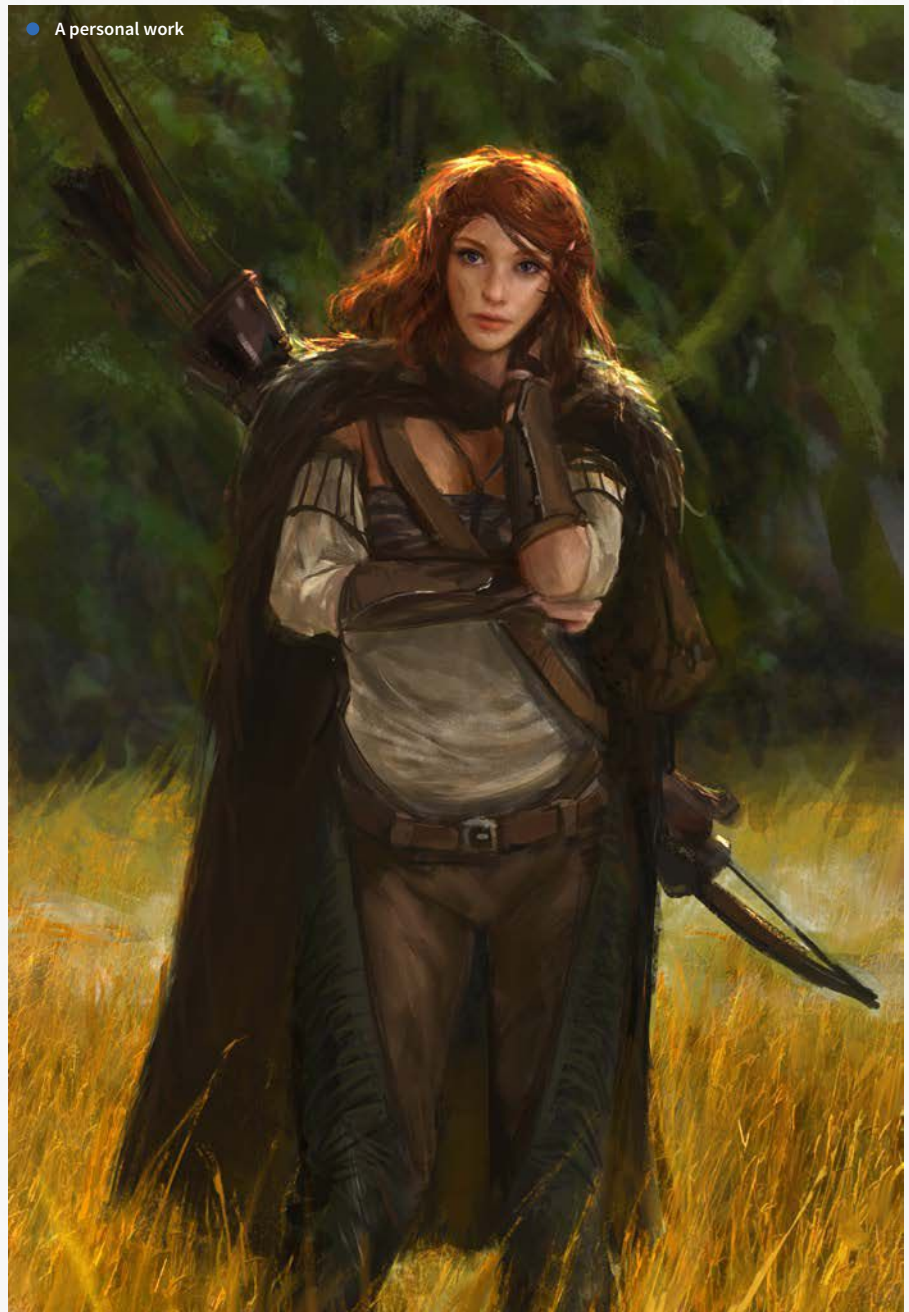
**2dartist:** Hi Efflam! Thank you for talking to 2dartist. Could you start things off by introducing yourself to any readers who might not be familiar with you or your work?

**Efflam Mercier:** Okay so, bonjour from France! I started digital painting and 3D around 2012, and I did everything in reverse, starting from 3D to compositing, photography, then to digital painting, and finally I'm back to drawing.

I have a problem-solving approach to creating images. I try to break down the paintings into simple logical elements, then use all the tools available to make it happen, thinking globally to make everything fit. Usually the thing I like the most is lighting and visual storytelling, that is the one thing that remains consistent; technique and style-wise, each piece is different!

**2da:** You have recently been working on *Iron Sky: The Coming Race*, as a concept designer. Can you tell us a bit about the project?

**EM:** I just finished working on it actually. We had some back and forth about the design as they were adjusting some of the script. I worked on a redesign



of a spaceship to make a scrapyards rebuilt version of it, and two sets that I built in 3D. I got some stills from the production and it looks like they are building the Hangar market I worked on! If it's close to my concept, I'll fly there just to walk on set; it must be quite a feeling.

**2da:** You have said in the past that your work emphasizes cinematic visual storytelling. How do you go about depicting a narrative within your work?

**EM:** What I usually do is try to have an image that is solid and readable enough so your eye can wander ►

## 🕒 Artist Timeline Efflam's career so far

**2014:** Quit school and offered a job as matte painter at Cube Creative

**2014:** First freelance job as a concept artist at Kollide

**2014:** One year contract with Cube Creative and school

**2015:** Environment concept design on *LawBreakers* from Boss Key Productions

**2015:** Concept art and color script for AAA game IP trailer at Unit Image

**2015:** Film VFX creature design

**2015:** Freelance concept design, movie sets and vehicle for *Iron Sky* universe

**2015:** *Magic: the Gathering* work (coming soon)



- Another learning piece, this time starting completely with painting, then photo texturing later in order to control the design process





- This was one of Efflam's earliest freelance works, back in mid 2014. The first time he actually started to save out his PSD files!

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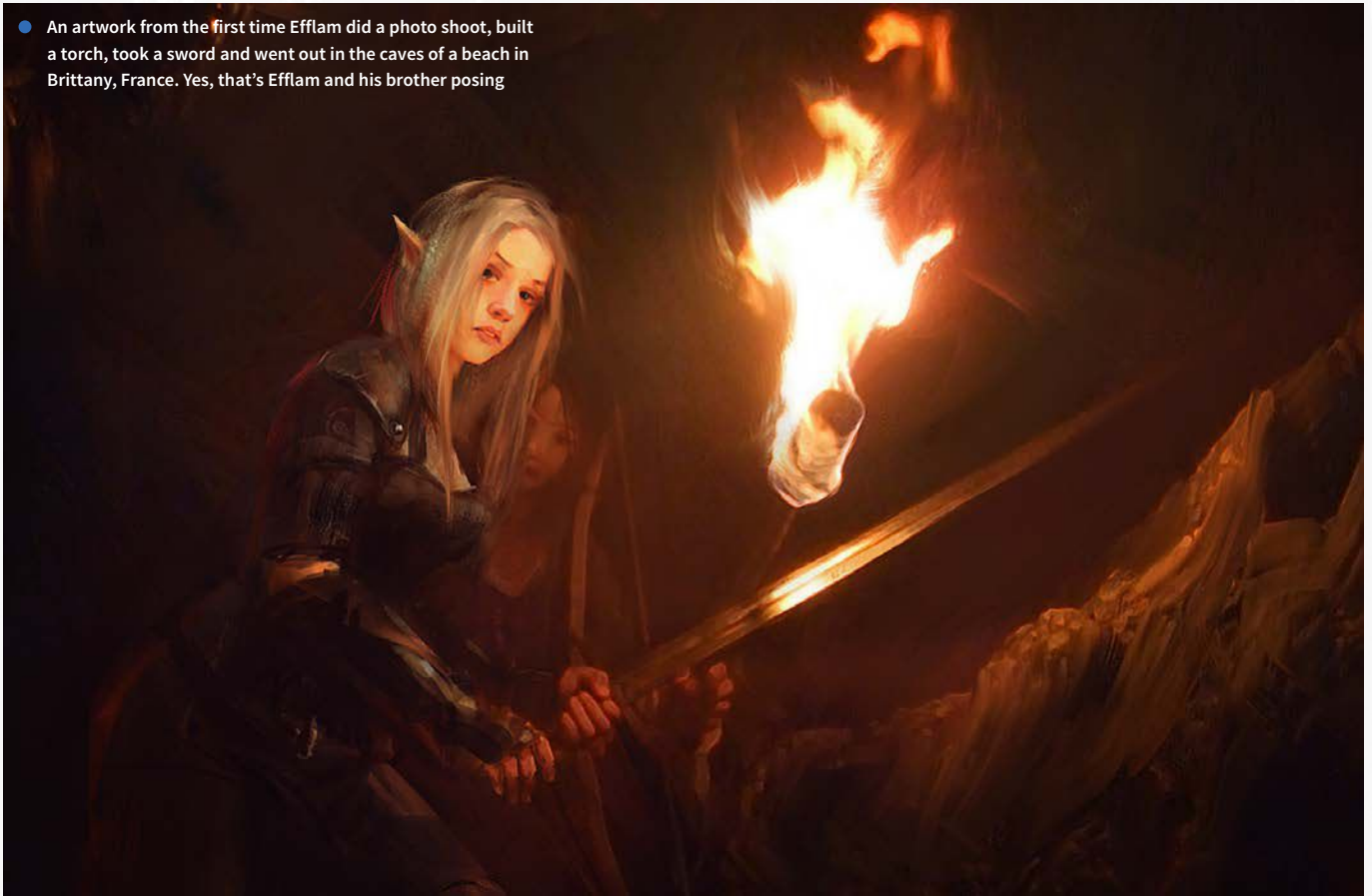


- This is a recent artwork where Efflam wanted to see if he could sculpt architectural details in 3D-Coat very fast





- An artwork from the first time Efflam did a photo shoot, built a torch, took a sword and went out in the caves of a beach in Brittany, France. Yes, that's Efflam and his brother posing



around. It's like having a steady camera in cinema; you can make it shaky, but it has to be a statement, it needs to have intent.

Then you set up your characters through drawing, photo shoots or 3D rendering. You think about lighting that can emphasize the scene, like on camera, it has to be in sync with the feeling you want to convey. Then come in details. Story details can be a slight pose, a subtle tweak, facial expressions, prop design choices, or a color choice. These add more background information or relate to each other. Like a puzzle, the big picture needs to be in the correct 'tone', and then you can add these subtle story details. Think about what the story is, and then how to tell it clearly without being too clichéd.

**2da:** Lighting is very important to your work; do you have any tips for readers who want to work on their lighting effects?

**EM:** I think it's important to study from multiple sources to get a good grasp on the logic of light. 3D is great because you control every parameter, photography is great because you see the limitations of cameras and understand the real world interpretation versus photo problem.

Then the actual logic of lighting can be learned through just looking at the world and thinking about it. Try to break down everything you see into textures,

## ⚡ PRO TIP

### Be ready for change!

You will want to reject it, but if it rings true, you need to embrace change. I have a friend who's an illustrator and I was discussing the issue of using photos or not in a painting, and he was rejecting it in block. A few months later he emailed me 'Dude, I was crazy not to use photos.' And it was the reverse for me. I went through whole phases of doubt where I thought any form of advanced drawing skill was pretty much useless for digital art. Now I'm starting to go down the drawing 'rabbit hole'.

light rays, and glossy reflections. On the aesthetics side, I can't recommend enough to watch good film cinematography. Check out shots by Janusz Kamiński and Roger Deakins.

**2da:** Can you tell us a bit about your path into working in the digital industry? Was there a significant moment when you knew that this was the career for you?

**EM:** There wasn't really any crazy turning point moment. I always knew that I wanted to tell stories with pictures because that's what I always did. If I can earn money and do it with cool people, that's a career right?

But in a way I feel a bit frustrated with the concept art industry sometimes. Rarely does anyone respect the story, if there's any story to tell at all.

**2da:** You have worked on television adverts, videogames, book covers and films. How do you find the different branches of the industry differ? Do the different areas come with different challenges?

**EM:** Okay so, television adverts are a fun way to get your hands on a different project each month, if not more, but they are frustrating in a way. Everything is often rushed because of the lack of budget and time.

With videogames the challenge is often that you can be asked to come up with random stuff that looks sort of functional. I would rather have a clear brief saying what it needs to do, or if it is a stylized game; get a brief on what story or mood I need to convey with the shapes.

For film I'd say that from my experience the biggest challenge is that there are tons of changes and ►

- This was one of Efflam's early experiments of creating natural environments using Corona and 3DS Max











**“Drawing helps 3D quite a bit for shape design, compositional arrangements, and anything aesthetic”**

you need to be fast, flexible and hit deadlines like clockwork. I can't say too much about film since I've only worked on three so far, but each with a bit of a special context.

**2da:** Which has been your favorite project to work on and why?

**EM:** I think it was the (ah I hate NDA!) work I did at Unit Image, because not only did it have a clear story,

I was also provided with the official game branding mood guide for outsourcing, which was quite an interesting document. I learned a lot from reading it.

The other reason why this project was cool was because I was asked to do a color script. This is what I love to do and what I'm good at. A color script is a color storyboard made of tiny paintings to convey the lighting mood required to tell the story. I made about 27 color keys (rough paintings) in a week, it was REALLY crazy.

**2da:** How does working as a freelancer compare with working as part of a busy company? What are the benefits and the drawbacks?

**EM:** It really depends on the company, and on if you're doing remote freelance or if you go to work at the studio to do the work. I've done both; I would say doing a freelance gig for like a week or so at a company is very scary.

You come to a place where you're unfamiliar with the machines, the people, the office, and you're expected to perform 200-percent. Freelance is cool because you're focused, you have a clear goal and brief (hopefully) but, it can get lonely.

With a company it's the reverse. It can get annoying in an open space when you want to focus, while its super cool to talk and hang out with the team too.





**2da:** What initial steps do you tend to take when you are first given a brief for a new project? Do you dive straight into sketching, or do you have a more analytical process?

**EM:** Again, I rarely have a set process, but what I do is breakdown the brief like a story, then make a list of what I need in my painting/sketch/3D to convey it. Some other specifics include whether it is stylized or not, if it exists and it's a mix job, or is it pure invention and design?

If it's mechanical I'll try going straight from loose ideation sketches to engineering research, then make new sketches. I do the same thing with a

creature; I gesture sketch then find real world animal references, and go back to drawing.

**2da:** What is your favorite software to work with? Are there any that you would like to try in the future?

**EM:** My favorite software is the one I'll be using next month! I always change software. I've gone from Blender to MODO then Maya, then back to Blender and now 3ds Max, ZBrush to 3D-Coat, MARI to Substance Painter, and so on.

I'm looking into integrating 3D-Coat and Blender more. The fact that Blender is free is just super handy for a freelancer I'd say.

**2da:** Working with both 2D and 3D software, how do the skills you have developed in 2D translate into your 3D work, and vice versa?

**EM:** In 3D you get perspective, light, and materials 'for free', but you don't get the taste or the understanding. It doesn't have to come necessarily from 2D, but you do have to research and learn.

Drawing also helps my 3D quite a bit when it comes to shape design, compositional arrangements, and anything aesthetic.

3D modeling helps a lot for drawing; understanding the breakdown of basic shapes and object ►





● This was one of Efflam's first 'breakthrough' paintings, where he figured how to use photos for design instead of photorealism

constructions. 3D lighting helped me a ton for painting, core understanding of the materials, and lights and their effect on an image.

**2da:** When you are working on personal projects what topics or themes do you like to explore?

**EM:** I like grand scale stuff, but I also like intimate, close-up style stories. I thought a bit about how I could have both interweaved together, it's not easy!

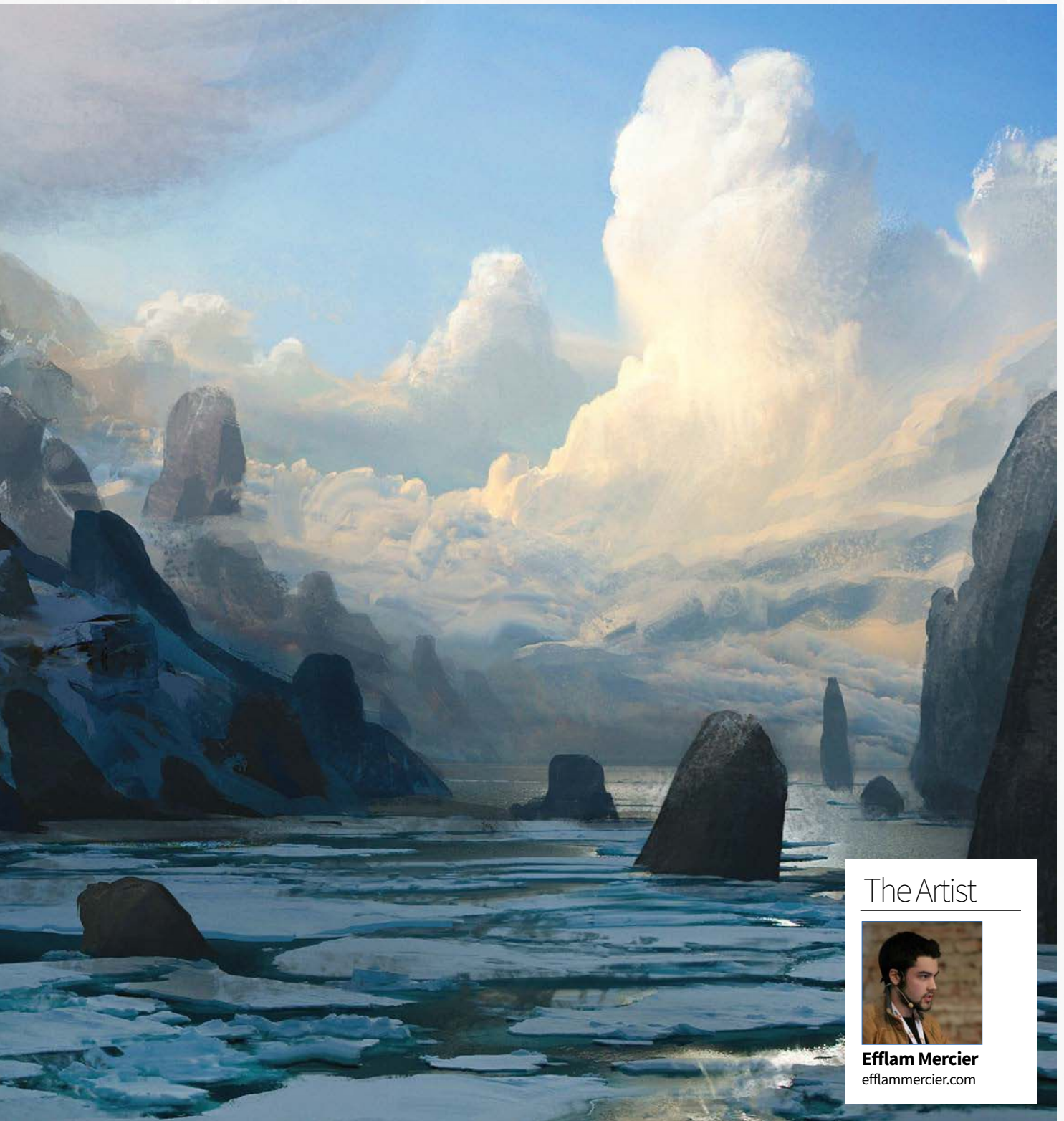
For example, I roughly sketched out an idea called 'flower season'; the basic idea is that there are these gigantic flying creatures that every primitive tribe is fighting for.

Every tribe has different and conflicting needs; some want to hunt the creatures, some want to use them for long distance travel, some need to harvest their fibers and horns because they have no wood. The story of a design is like nature; the interdependent

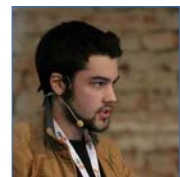
relationship between a flower and a bee, or a tiny 'parasite' bird cleaning the teeth of a crocodile. A sea worm slowly eats a fish tongue and obligates the fish to rely on the worm to be his tongue. Nature is beautiful and brutal; it's something I'd like to be able to channel in my stories.

**2da:** It is easy to get distracted when working on personal projects. How do you manage to keep yourself motivated?





## The Artist



**Efflam Mercier**  
efflammercier.com

**EM:** It's really hard! I don't have any miracle tips for that, you might be 100-percent focused on something and all of a sudden some life changing stuff happens. You meet 'that' girl, or even an artist hero you admire who blows your mind, and then it's done. It sets you on a new path, you can try to chase your project, but in a way it may just live in the past. So in a way I think it has to be the main thing you are passionate about, which nothing can change.

**2da:** And finally, what can we expect from you in the near future?

**EM:** Surprisingly, more drawings! I've been avoiding it for a while but now I feel like it's time to go really more seriously into it. After all, it's a tool too but what a powerful one! I've had some great artists explain to me their vision of drawing and now finally I sort of got what they all mean by 'study drawing'.

Further into the future? I'll probably try a different medium: Film? CGI animation? Games or traditional painting? Let's see what the future is made of. ●



“These tutorials not only provide interesting exercises for the beginner to help build a strong foundation for drawing and painting, but also provide important insights into the mindset of a concept artist. Very useful and inspiring!”

**Lois Van Baarle (aka Loish)**

Digital concept artist & animator | [loish.net](http://loish.net)

# beginner's guide to digital painting in Photoshop® characters

Following on from the highly successful *Beginner's Guide to Digital Painting in Photoshop*, this latest title explores the popular techniques used in character design.

*Beginner's Guide to Digital Painting: Characters* is a comprehensive guide for artists wishing to create convincing and detailed characters. It features established artists such as Charlie Bowater (concept artist at Atomhawk) and Derek Stenning (freelance concept artist and illustrator, with clients including Marvel Entertainment and Nintendo) who share their industry experiences by covering such aspects as posing characters, choosing the correct costumes, conveying emotions, and creating suitable moods.

Comprehensive step-by-step instructions – plus a quick tips section demonstrating how to paint elements that are integral to character design and a glossary covering essential Photoshop tools – make this an invaluable resource for those looking to learn new skills, as well as those pursuing the next level.

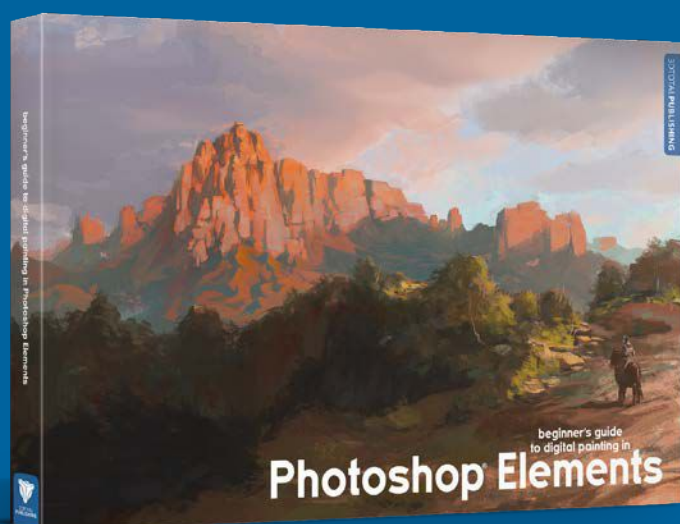


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# beginner's guide to digital painting in Photoshop® Elements

The *Beginner's Guide* series is back with a clear and comprehensive look at working in Adobe Photoshop Elements.



In this sequel to the best-selling *Beginner's Guide to Digital Painting in Photoshop* book, a new set of talented artists break down the best and simplest techniques for creating amazing artwork in Photoshop Elements. This fundamental guide offers easy-to-follow steps that guide you through setting up your software, working with brushes and basic art theory, as well as chapters on creating certain artistic styles.

With a simplified interface and fewer variable parameters to learn than its big brother, Photoshop, Photoshop Elements is an ideal tool for any artist's first digital adventure. This book is therefore a perfect resource for:

- Newcomers to Photoshop and digital painting
- Artists looking to switch from a traditional medium
- Lecturers and students teaching/studying digital art courses
- Hobbyists who want to learn useful tips

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## The Artist



**Fernando Acosta**  
facosta.com

**Interviewed by:**  
Annie Moss

Fernando Acosta is a senior concept artist based in Vancouver, Canada. He has worked on a number of game and film projects and currently works remotely for WB Games, Montreal.

# Mastering game and film art

Fernando Acosta talks about how his past experience as an electrical engineer enhanced his career as a concept artist, working on projects for Hasbro, Ubisoft and WB Games ▶





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Although he began his working life as an electrical engineer, Fernando Acosta made the brave decision to follow his dreams and become a professional artist. By combining his experience of design with a talent for illustration Fernando at first worked in traditional media before discovering the digital medium. Largely self-motivated, he taught himself how to use Photoshop before winning his first concept art job in 2008.

Since then the Canada-based artist, originally from Colombia, has continued to explore further into the concept art world, learning new software and constantly seeking to enhance his skills. As a result he has worked on numerous videogame and film projects including *Halo 4*, *Sin City: A Dame to Kill for* and the newly released *Assassin's Creed: Syndicate*. In his spare time Fernando has also been working on his own personal project, the *Bounty Hunter Wars* art book. When

completed the book will incorporate a number of character designs, environments and key-frame art pieces developed around an adventure packed storyline.

This month Fernando showcases some of his most recent works and talks to 2dartist about his momentous change of career, expanding his experience with different software and how he developed from illustrator to character designer, and latterly to environment artist.

**2dartist:** Hi Fernando, thank you for chatting to 2dartist! Can you kick things off by telling us a bit about yourself and your work?

**Fernando Acosta:** Hi, my name is Fernando Acosta and I'm a senior concept artist working for the entertainment industry based in Vancouver, Canada. I'm also a member of the IATSE (The International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees, Moving

Picture Technicians, Artists and Allied Crafts of the United States, Its Territories and Canada). I've been a concept artist working in Canada for the past seven years now. I worked as a storyboard artist and illustrator prior to that, as well as an electrical engineer. I'm a Canadian citizen, originally from Bogota, Colombia.

I'm currently working for WB Games Montreal as a senior character concept artist on an unannounced title. I specialize in character and costume design, but recently I've had to expand to environment and key-frame mood paintings.

**2da:** What caused you to make the leap from electrical engineering into the art world?

**FA:** Growing up in Colombia, my parents wanted me to have a 'real' career and although they had good intentions, my heart just wasn't really in it. After a year or so in engineering I was faced with a tough

● Interior shot of the bank library

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decision to either take over the family business or follow my heart. In the end I decided to follow my dreams, but I didn't want to lose all the knowledge I had just gained. So I decided to mix my hobby which was art, with the design aspect of engineering and that's how I landed in the gaming industry.

**2da:** Do you have any advice for someone who is thinking about making a similar career change?

**FA:** It's always a tough decision, you have to weigh up the options, the pros and cons, and make sure you can commit to it. But I strongly believe that if you really want it strong enough and are prepared to work for it, life has a way of working things out. It's the best thing that I could have done and if I can do it, I believe anybody can.

**2da:** Initially you worked as an illustrator and storyboard artist. How has this foundation in drawing aided your concept art?

## ⚡ PRO TIP

### Doing film studies

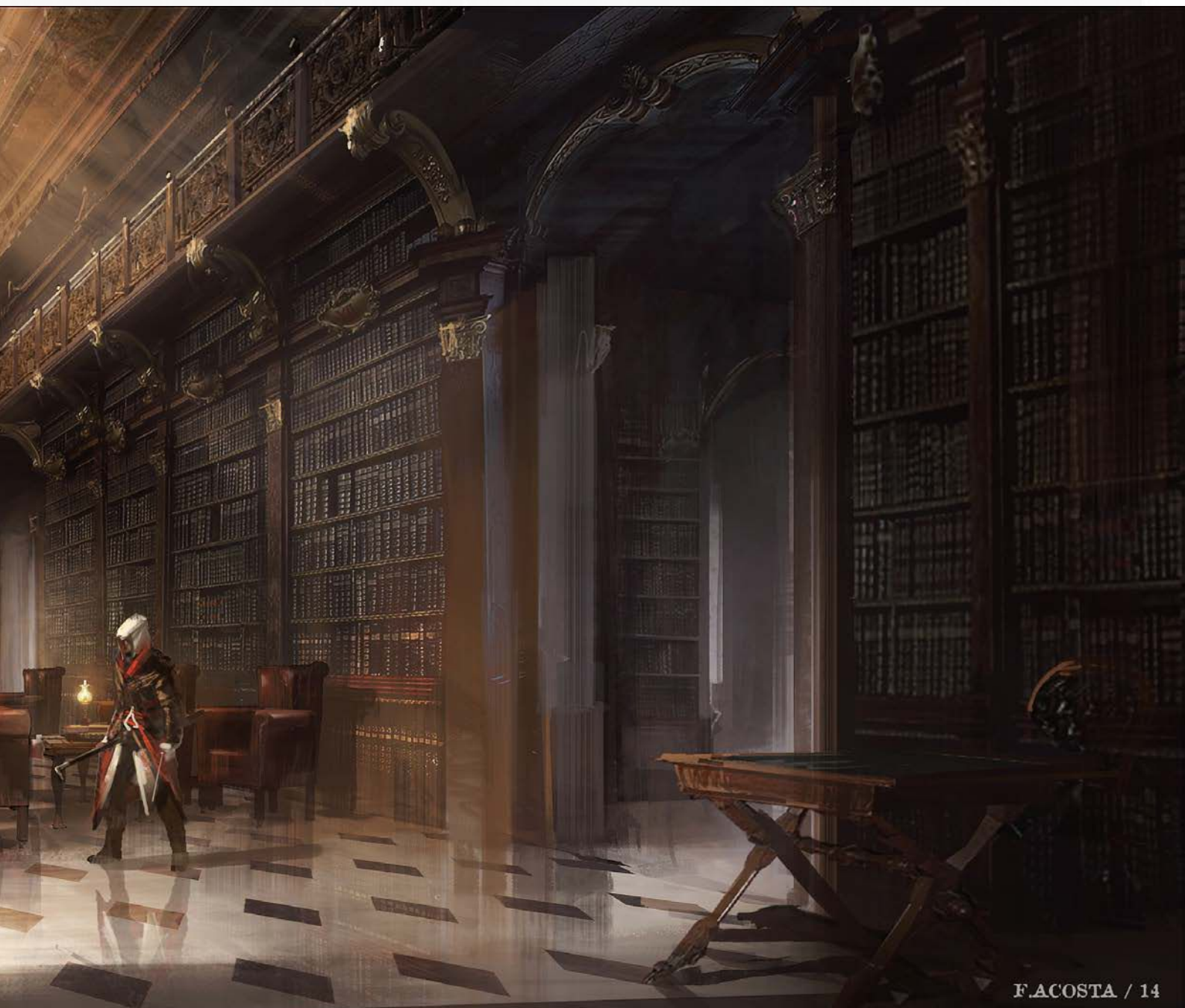
If you want to improve on your lighting, composition and environment design skills, I recommend you grab a couple of different films you like and try your hand doing screen grab studies from certain scenes. You can try out different brush techniques and you will see that the more you do them the faster you become, and also you will notice that you will start applying what you have learned to your own paintings as well.

**FA:** Through my experience as both an illustrator and storyboard artist, I learned how to take direction from writers and art directors. I learned how to follow their direction in the best way possible in order to make strong and powerful designs as well as make their ideas come to life.

**2da:** What challenges did you face when you were transitioning into a full-time concept artist, from traditional to digital?

**FA:** Initially I was working with traditional media, and so when I made the transition I had to first learn the digital tools. I took a 3D course in Vancouver, but it wasn't until I attended the Massive Black workshop in Montreal in 2006 that I finally saw the concept art world and immediately fell in love with it.

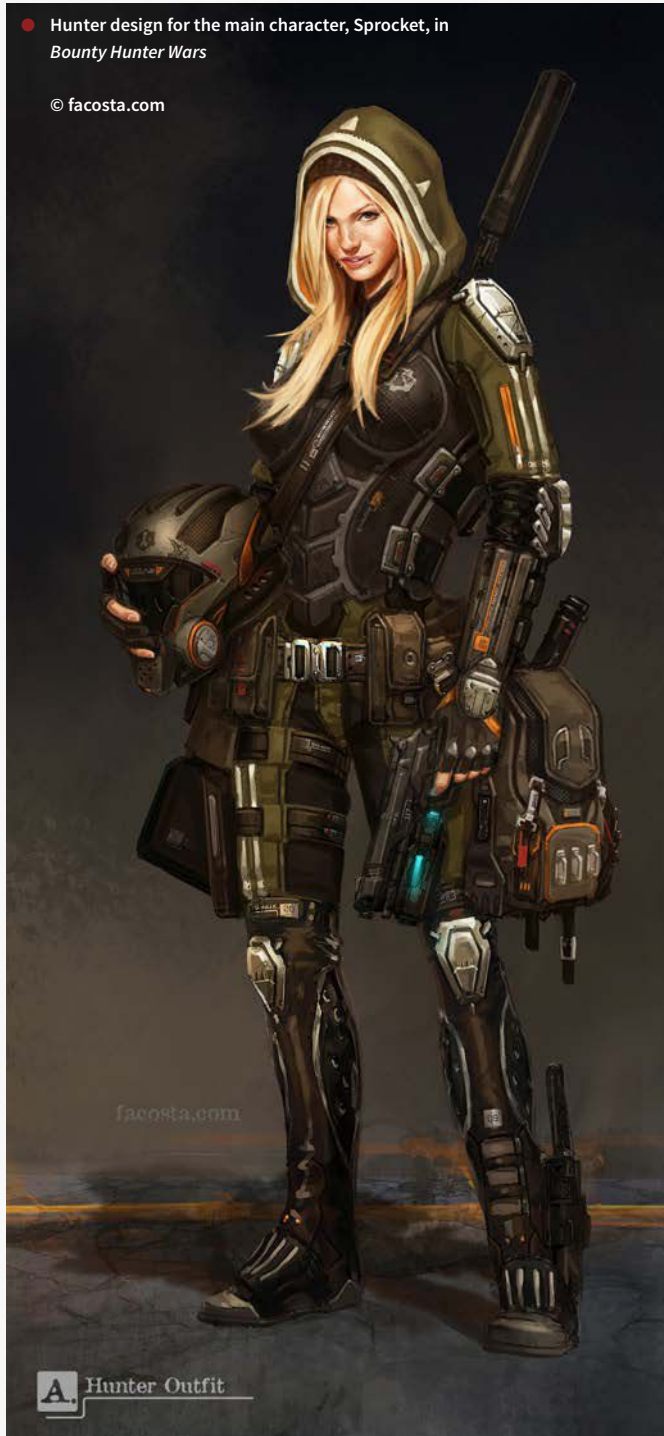
Having had no formal training in drawing, I had to teach myself how to draw in Photoshop, learn the principles of composition, perspective, design, and ►





- Hunter design for the main character, Sprocket, in *Bounty Hunter Wars*

© facosta.com



**A** Hunter Outfit

- Academy design for Sprocket, before she becomes a bounty hunter

© facosta.com



**C** Academy Outfit

so on. So I spent about eight months learning it all on my own and developing a portfolio. I must say that all the different Gnomon DVDs were of great help. After lots of hard work a company in Eastern Canada brought me back to Canada and like they say, the rest is history!

**2da:** Over the last seven years you have worked as a concept artist on a number of high profile projects. How have you adapted and developed your skills over the course of these projects?

**FA:** Each project is different and has had its own set of challenges, and with each of them I believe you

learn and grow as an artist. You do this by learning a new tool that may be able to help you with your workflow, sharing and learning tips with your colleagues and fellow artists, or by putting in the time to research and truly understand what you're supposed to be designing.

**2da:** You work with both 2D and 3D software; how have you found combining the two areas improved your techniques?

**FA:** It has definitely been of great help having 3D in my arsenal of tools. For environment designs it's so easy to block them out in Maya and try different

angles and lighting scenarios that you can share with your art director in a quick and timely manner, and then just finish and polish them in Photoshop. A whole new world of possibilities opens up just by navigating in a 3D space that may have been tougher or taken longer to explore by just trying them out in 2D. This combination of work is becoming more and more common and it has definitely sped up my workflow. Recently, I'm adding ZBrush into my arsenal for character work as well. I'm trying to stay current with what's out there.

**2da:** For over a year you have been working on the new game, *Assassin's Creed: Syndicate* which has just ►



01

- A 3D mockup of the Fight Club scene. It shows how Fernando used 3D to try out different compositions

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02



03







- One of the toughest and funniest paintings Fernando did for *Assassin's Creed: Syndicate*. It's still one of his favorites

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● Mood painting for a fight scene

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**“I would do film studies in the morning on my own, or try out different methods in Maya, SketchUp and Photoshop to see how I could incorporate them into my workflow”**

been released. Can you tell us a little bit about your involvement in the project?

**FA:** I joined *Assassin's Creed: Syndicate* in early January 2014, initially as support for the environment team. Having additional skills as a character designer as well as a production artist (props and vehicles), I was able to work on all the different aspects of the game. So in the end every day became a different challenge, which is my preferred way of working, and I was able to offer wider support for the different teams.

**2da:** How did you find working remotely compared with projects where you have been working in the center of a team? Was it an enjoyable experience?

**FA:** Working remotely you have the benefit of organizing your own schedule and working at your own pace, but it can be a bit isolated too. In-house you get the benefits of having a team close by that you can learn from and share in ideas, but you are forced to work at a certain schedule.

So each way of working has its own set of pros and cons. I worked remotely for Ubisoft for a little longer than a year and it was one of the best experiences in my freelancing career.

The art director was a joy to work with and made me feel like part of the team and the guys on the team would also chime in here and there. It just made the whole experience a real blast!

**2da:** For *Assassin's Creed: Syndicate* you had to work in a very versatile way, covering several different aspects of the game, how did you adapt your skills for each task?

**FA:** I'm primarily a character designer, so when I joined the environment team I knew I had to up my game in this area. I would do film studies in the morning on my own, or try out different methods in Maya, SketchUp and Photoshop to see how I could incorporate them into my workflow.

Each piece was a different challenge and I would force myself to try things that were out of my comfort zone to grow as an artist, and make each piece a bit more interesting. The guys on the team were of great help with their feedback and the art director was supportive in that he would always listen to my ideas and would give me the chance to try them out. By the end, I got to a point where I was pretty





F.ACOSTA/114

comfortable with my environment work and I feel it was a result of all the hard work and the great team work on this project.

**2da:** What were some of the new techniques you developed while working on the *Assassin's Creed: Syndicate* project?

**FA:** Like I mentioned before, each piece was an opportunity for me to try something new. So whether

it was adding 3D to help with the initial block-out, or working with photographs, or even testing out various brushes in a different way, I would try them out. I would learn from this experience and take what I had gained to incorporate it into the next piece that I attempted.

**2da:** The game is set in nineteenth-century London, how did you go about researching the time period and the look of the era?

**FA:** Luckily Ubisoft has a history and reference gathering department that was of great help when it came to certain specific tasks. But I also spent some time on my own reading about the era, watching documentaries on mill factories and Victorian dressing, as well as movies and TV shows that have explored this era in the past. I find the Industrial Revolution era quite interesting so it was a lot of fun reading and learning more about it, and then trying to recreate those aspects in my art. ►

## 🕒 Artist Timeline Fernando's career to this point

**2006:** Finished a Game Art program in Vancouver

**2012:** Worked on *Halo 4*

**2014:** Became a Canadian citizen!

**2008:** First concept art job, Longtail Studios, Canada

**2013:** Started freelancing

**2014:** Worked on *Assassin's Creed: Syndicate*

**2010:** Designed *G.I. Joe* figures for Hasbro

**2013:** Worked on his first film as a concept artist for *Sin City: A Dame to Kill for*

**2015:** Now working for WB Games, Montreal

**2011:** Started work at AAA studio, Digital Extremes



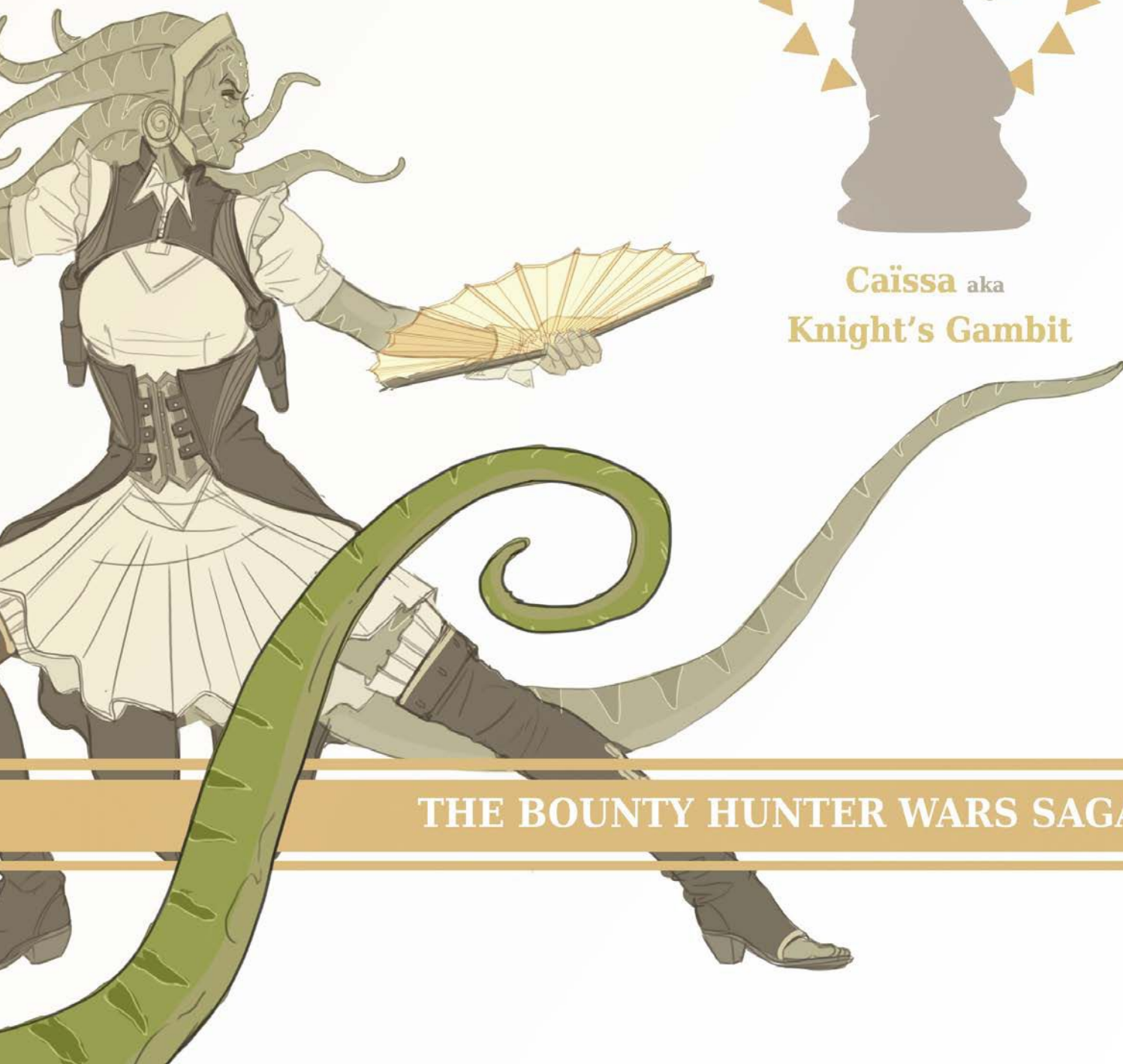
- Style exploration for a villain character in *Bounty Hunter Wars*

© facosta.com



facosta.com





**Caïssa** aka  
**Knight's Gambit**

## THE BOUNTY HUNTER WARS SAGA



● Hunter design for Mack, another main character in *Bounty Hunter Wars*

© facosta.com



● Character exploration sketches

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FACOSTA / 14

**2da:** Your next project is an unannounced title for WB Games, can you tell us anything about the project?

**FA:** Nope, sorry all top secret for the moment!

**2da:** You have also been working on a personal project in your spare time, *The Bounty Hunter Wars*. How is the project coming along?

**FA:** *Bounty Hunter Wars* is my own project. It's me drawing inspiration from all the great action and sci-fi movies from the late 70s and early 80s.

A story that plays out like a chess game and whose characters are a group of mercenaries pulling off a heist in order to get the bounty. In the end their actions will cause a lot of problems for the main crew

and a big war within the Bounty Hunter Guild. At the moment I have a big chunk of it planned out and I just need the time to actually sit down and draw all these pieces that I have in my head. I'm doing it in my spare time, so I'm a bit behind. If you want to learn more about it check out my 'new' site [www.facosta.com](http://www.facosta.com). I will be doing more posts about it now that I have a blog again!



FLORENCE NIGHTINGALE



- A cool outfit for Florence Nightingale

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CLARA O'DEA



- Little Clara, who can be seen in the first trailer for the game

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- Mood painting for the Thames river location

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**2da:** And finally, where would you like to see your work take you next? Are there any artists or studios you would love to work with?

**FA:** Yes, for sure there are plenty of great artists and studios out there. Marvel Studios, Sony Santa

Monica, Ready at Dawn and Quantic Dream in Paris off the top of my head. I would love to collaborate with the Ubisoft team again as well.

I'd also like to do some more film work, especially in collaboration with the amazing costume designers

there are in the film industry. That's always been something that I've been really interested in and it would be a dream job to collaborate together on a cool film project. ●

*Thank you Fernando for chatting to 2dartist!*



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**Nunzio Paci**  
nunziopaci.it

**Software Used:**  
Photoshop

Nunzio Paci is a visual artist based in Bologna, Italy. He exhibits his work, which deals with the relationship between man and nature, across the world.

A R T I S T   S P O T L I G H T

# Embellished anatomy

Get a glimpse inside the portfolio of Nunzio Paci, who blends nature with anatomical drawing ▶



Having previously studied human, animal and comparative anatomy in his drawing, Nunzio Paci has developed a portfolio of traditional artworks exploring the physicality of humanity and nature.

His work is particularly concerned with animal and plant forms in connection with ways in which the human body can be manipulated and contorted, often presenting his works in a manner reminiscent of annotated medical studies. Although his works have a tendency to take on a morbid theme, with figures often appearing dead, Nunzio has stated in the past that his work is an attempt to find balance between reality and the imagination.

This concern for balance can be seen in his often surreal work which sees plants emerging from anatomically detailed human bodies. Working on paper and canvases of between 60cm square and 100cm square, Nunzio's work draws the viewer into his intricate world.

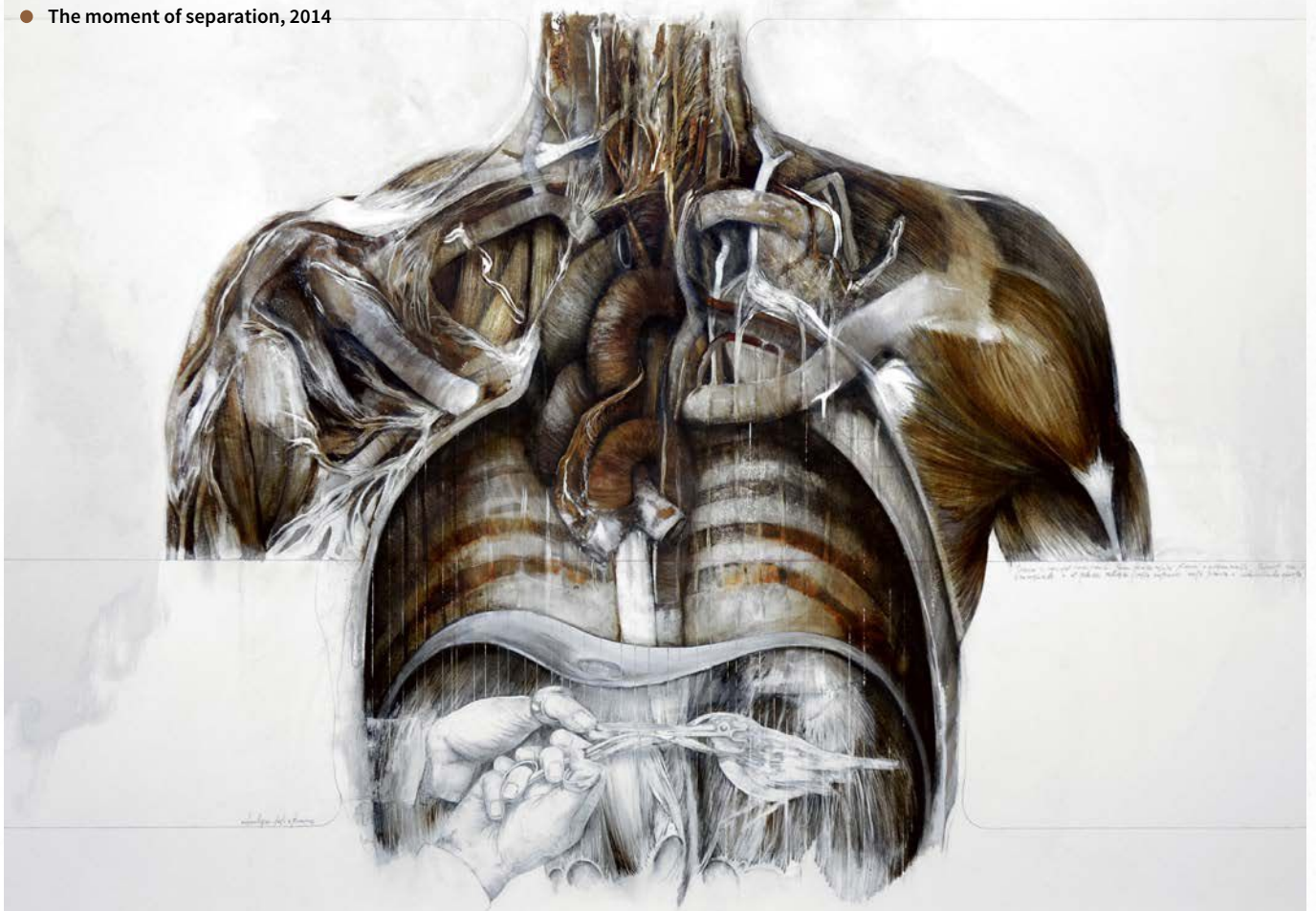
He mixes delicate pencil drawing with oil paints and in doing so, pulls the focus of his artworks away from the contorted features of his subjects. It is the more visceral elements, ►

● **Memories of a Body, 2015**

Nunzio has used oil and pencil on canvas to create all of the images shown here

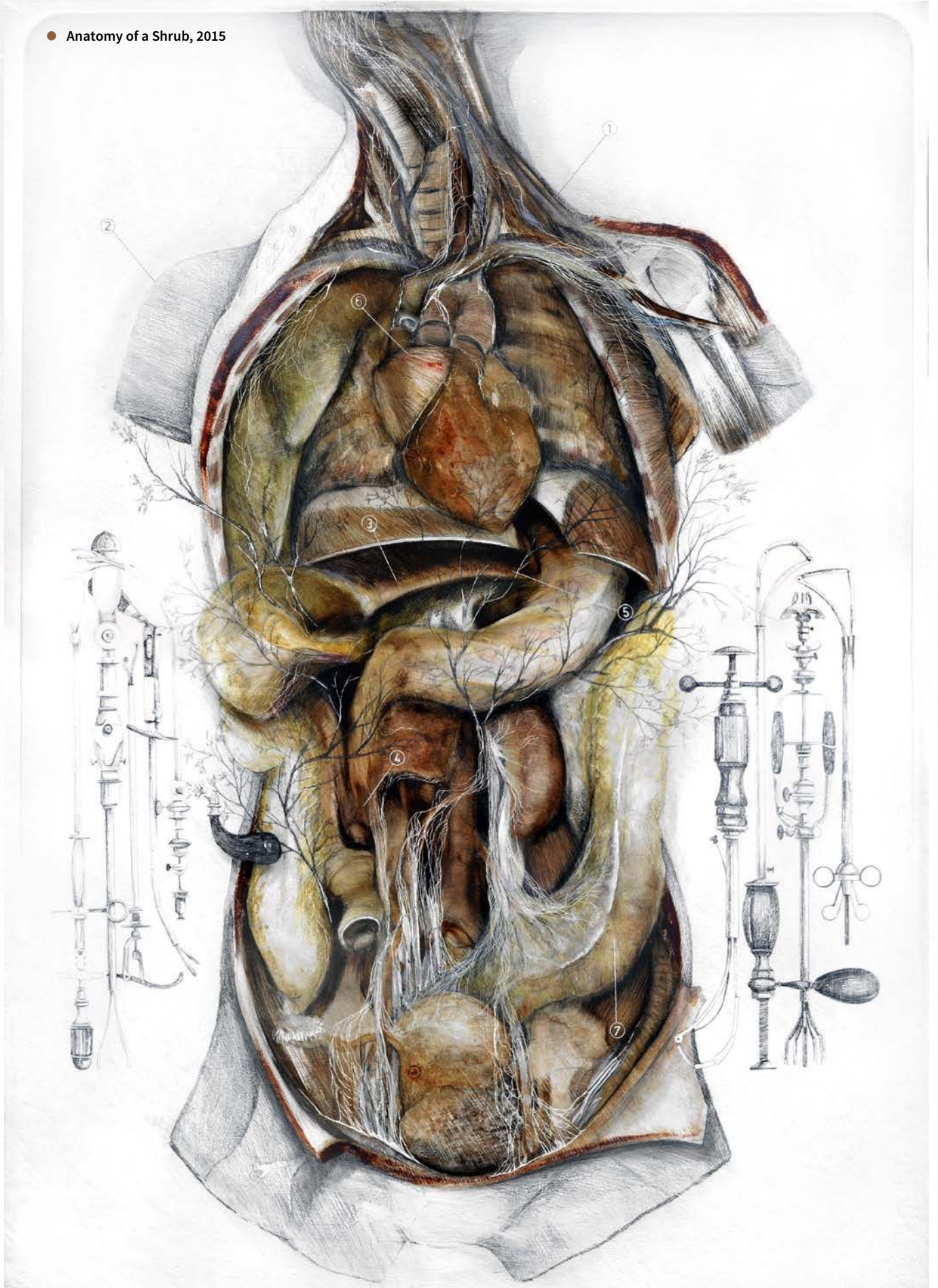


● **The moment of separation, 2014**

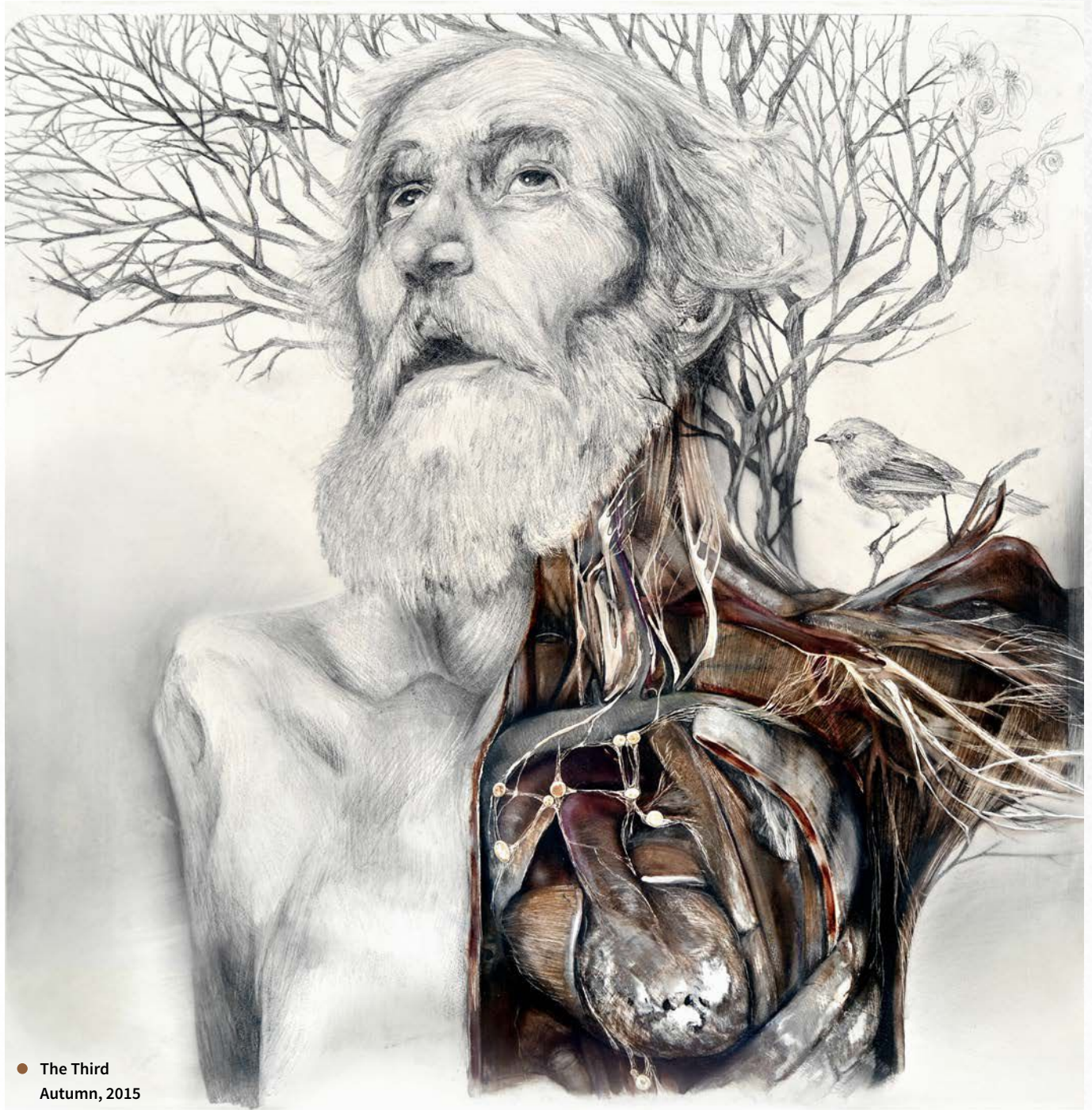




● Anatomy of a Shrub, 2015







● The Third  
Autumn, 2015

such as internal organs turning into roots, or a bird pecking at an esophagus which instead draw the attention of the viewer.

This month in 2dartist, Nunzio shows us paintings from his series *In the Garden of Idne*. The series has connotations to the ancient folklore tale of an early version of humanity; of a man more plant than human sometimes known as the 'Vegetable Man'. In this series Nunzio's work explores humanities' lost connection with nature.

**2dartist:** Hello Nunzio! Thanks for talking to 2dartist. First off, could you introduce yourself

**"I spend periods of time in isolation which are necessary to clarify the subjects I'm going to depict in my studio, in total silence and tranquility"**

with a bit about your background and projects?

**Nunzio Paci:** I'm just an ordinary guy with an art-focused educational background. The rest is not very interesting but perhaps someday I will tell more or someone will do it for me.

**2da:** Your paintings explore the combined themes of both anatomy and nature, what inspires these works of yours?

**NP:** My work is an attempt to exorcise the fears I live with daily. Nature and anatomy are metaphors to represent what I'm trying to tame inside me.

**2da:** What are your preferred tools to use?

**NP:** My left hand, my brain and my soul.

**2da:** Do you have a particular place you like to go to draw? Do you create your works in a studio, at home or out in nature?

**NP:** The processes that generate the images of my works are quite long. Often it happens during ►



● The Keepers of the Flesh, 2015



● Atropia, 2015



● Still life with silk camellias, 2015





● When the flesh sleeps, everything sleeps, 2015



my moments of 'seclusion from society'. I spend periods of time in isolation which are necessary to clarify the subjects I'm going to depict in my studio, in total silence and tranquility.

**2da:** Your drawings are incredibly precise, how do you ensure that your drawings are accurate? What have you found most useful for honing your anatomical drawing skills?

**NP:** I don't think I have any specific anatomical skills as an artist. I believe that drawing a couple of kidneys or a house at the foot of a mountain, technically, require the same ability. Certainly,

in the past I studied human, animal and comparative anatomy in depth, with a special interest in morbid anatomy.

**2da:** Which techniques would you like to develop in the future? Are there any materials you would also like to experiment with?

**NP:** I don't think it's possible to plan experimentation. I believe it should happen in the most natural way. The materials, the techniques, the tools I will be using in the future will be only a means to represent the images flowing through my mind.

**2da:** And finally, can you tell us a bit about your plans for the future?

**NP:** I've recently been awarded a three month stay at NKD – Nordic Artists' Centre in Dale, Norway, an Artist-in-Residence program funded by the Norwegian Ministry of Culture.

The residency will take place in 2016 and I'm sure it will leave a mark on my work and on me, both as an artist and as a person. ●

*Thank you for taking the time to speak to 2dartist!*



● Scent of wild  
Stellaria, 2015



● I will keep your branches, I will  
repudiate your flesh, 2014



● Your breath on my  
snowy fronds, 2014





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# beginner's guide to sketching

characters, creatures & concepts

Embark on a sketching journey with the inspirational Beginner's Guide to Sketching: Characters, Creatures and Concepts.

From gesture drawing and finding simple shapes to mastering line quality and shading, Beginner's Guide to Sketching: Characters, Creatures and Concepts is a fantastic companion that will teach you to sketch confidently while helping you improve the way you design. Your journey will begin with a look at drawing materials and techniques, before moving on to essential warm-up exercises to help you become familiar with the fundamental basics. Four master projects by seasoned professional artists will then take you from concept to final illustration, walking you step by step through poses, designs, and costumes before culminating in a final scene. Featured artists include Justin Gerard, Brun Croes, and Sylwia Bomba.





DANIEL GISH

Sketchbook

Discover the imaginative sci-fi creature designs from inside the sketchbook of Daniel Gish...

## The Artist



**Daniel Gish**  
[artstation.com/  
artist/danielgish](http://artstation.com/artist/danielgish)

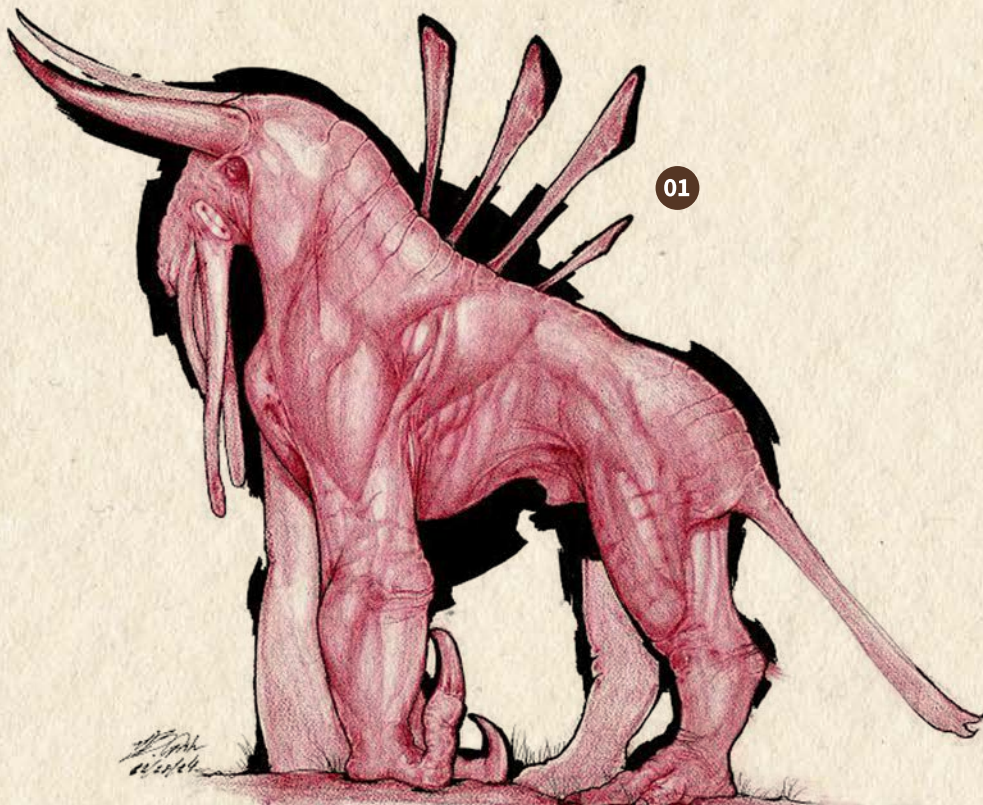
Daniel Gish has been drawing ever since he can remember, and was inspired by sci-fi movies to be a concept designer. He is currently a freelance concept and graphic designer.



## Concept designer Daniel Gish lets us peak inside his creature-full sketchbook...

For my own sketchbooks I usually keep them very loose, almost scribbles and line work that just stretch across the page as I explore forms and what-not, but when I find something interesting in the explorations I render it. I figure if it's a personal sketchbook and not client work then it's mine to draw whatever I so please in it, and that kind of freedom is liberating in a creative sense. Especially if you like concept art, your imagination is the limit, and there are no limits to the imagination.

Sketching is the best way of bringing out ideas from my imagination; sketching is really how all artists can journal and record their imagination as well. I often use a lot of notes alongside my sketches if I think of a back-story for the concept that I'm sketching. My sketchbooks have lately become sketchbook journal hybrids, simply because writing is so similar to drawing and because I like both. I have piles of sketchbooks and they go back for many years. It's really good for an artist to keep old work to look back on and be inspired by how far they've come since then.







03

01 This is a sketch of a bison-like mammal from an alien planet

02 Although Daniel often works with a mechanical pencil, he thinks there is a lot to explore with inks and pen

03 This quadruped mammal is very slender and aerodynamic, sprinting and ramming of its prey because it lives on a planet with vast planes of desert. Its skeleton is infused with thorns and its entire vertebrae acts as a shock absorber

04 A head sketch for an alien concept

#### Inspiration and ideas

A lot of industry leaders have sketchbooks that have greatly inspired mine such as Neville Page, Allen Williams, and Carlos Huante. I really feel like those kinds of designers are the living Gigers of our time. And of course I pay my respect and inspiration to H. R. Giger, who I consider to be the father of creature design as we know it.

Many movies have influenced my art direction. For example when I was more character and bipedal oriented with my style, I watched *Avatar* in theaters when it came out. That inspired me to start drawing quadruped creatures such as alien rhinos and bison, various fauna and flora that I would envision to be living on some distant planet in another reality.

I also love to implement the idea of inter-dimensional travel in nearly all of my creature concepts as they all exist as part of a Universe or an alternate reality. I'd like to publish books on these as an art or back-story book series.

#### Materials

My most familiar tool has basically been the mechanical pencil. I would say for sketching, it is superior for rendering but there are also a lot of great things to explore in ink and pen. My favorite sketching pencils are the HB graphite pencil and Prismacolor Premier colored pencils. If I'm ►



04





05





06

05 A design for an evolved Wabba Toad

06 A European Biomatrix

sketching in pencil, I can render the drawing a lot easier because I'm so familiar with it. Whereas my pen drawings are usually all line work and form scribbles of buff zombies, and messed up broken-teeth faces, and things of that nature mixed with classical figure studies essentially.

#### Sketching techniques

For my own approach to sketching and creature and character development, I keep my sketches

loose because I want to explore ideas and possibilities. If a creature designer or character artist goes with the generic humanoid alien or zombie design I feel like it gets old quickly.

My design style is usually abstract so I sketch very loosely but generally with functional anatomy. For example if I'm drawing a squid creature I'll get a 0.5mm Pitt pen and quickly scribble tentacle shapes on soft paper. ●









## ⚡ PRO TIP

### Practice makes perfect

As common as the quote may sound, practice does make perfect. If you invest so much time into something you can really take it to whichever level you can accomplish in a lifetime of creativity. The sky is the limit as far as the imagination goes.

07 A ghoul virus concept

08 Another design for a Wabba Toad



"I have sketchbooks going back many years. It's good to keep old work to look back on and be inspired by how far they've come"



08 A character designed as a professor of aerospace and surgery

09 A hard-skinned alien which smells its surroundings to detect enemies. Daniel drew this in pencil then imported it to Photoshop to add color to the energy orbs





# 2dartist

## Would you like to see your sketches featured in 2dartist magazine?

We're always on the lookout for talented artists  
and their artwork to adorn the pages of our  
magazine. If you think you have what it takes,  
get in touch!

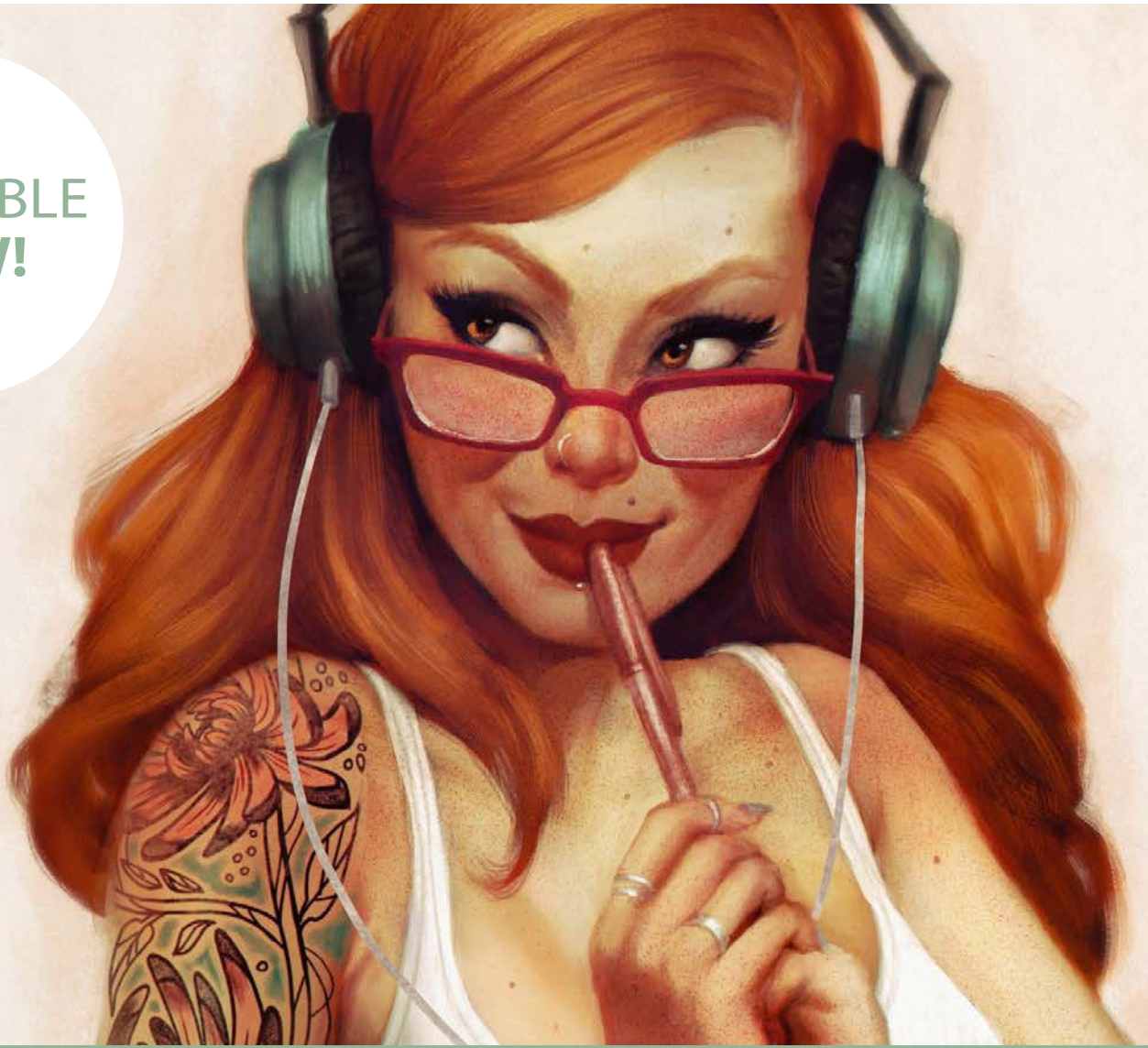
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# Art Gallery

Each issue the 2dartist team selects 10 of the best digital images from around the world. Enjoy!



**Kassian**

Philipp Kruse

Year created: 2015

Web: [artstation.com/artist/philippkruse](http://artstation.com/artist/philippkruse)

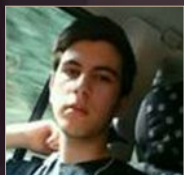




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## Flower Crown

Jorgen Kuqi

Year created: 2015

Web: [jurikoi.com](http://jurikoi.com)

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*Jurikoi 2015*  
JURIKOI.COM





  
maja-lisa



**Into The White**  
Maja-Lisa Kehlet Hansen  
Year created: 2015  
Web: [artstation.com/  
artist/majalisakehlet](http://artstation.com/artist/majalisakehlet)  
© 2015 Maja-Lisa  
Kehlet Hansen





**Abandoned trains**

José Julián Londoño Calle

Year created: 2015

Web: [artstation.com/artist/handsdigitalstudio](http://artstation.com/artist/handsdigitalstudio)





*Class.Demo*

José Julián 100 / Vigilancia





## **Impetuous 2**

Alexey Egorov

Year created: 2015

Web: [alexegorov.cgsociety.org](http://alexegorov.cgsociety.org)

© Alexey Egorov













### **Ships**

Wangjie Li

Year created: 2011

Web: [wangjieli.com](http://wangjieli.com)





## Snow Castle

Aritra Dey

Year created: 2015

Web: [aritra89.wix.com/aritra89](http://aritra89.wix.com/aritra89)

[aritra.dey89@gmail.com](mailto:aritra.dey89@gmail.com)









### Pool cat

Anna Nikonova aka Newmilky

Year created: 2015

Web: [artstation.com/artist/newmilky](http://artstation.com/artist/newmilky)















**Lima Site**

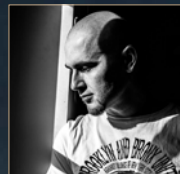
Bryn G Jones

Year created: 2015

Web: [facebook.com/artwithbryn](https://facebook.com/artwithbryn)







## Warrior with horns

Marek Mazur

Year created: 2015

Web: [marou.artstation.com](http://marou.artstation.com)







## Need inspiration for a fun project this month?

2dartist is starting a regular reader's challenge where you could win a 3dtotal shop voucher worth £60 and see your work featured in our magazine. Challenge yourself to create an artwork based on the mini-brief below and submit your creation and contact details to [2dchallenge@3dtotal.com](mailto:2dchallenge@3dtotal.com) with the title 'Challenge gallery' by 18th December 2015 to be in with a chance of winning!

**Mini-Brief:** Design a cave-dwelling creature! Design and paint in a scene an original creature character that lives in cave. Your artwork should be original and not use fan art.



## The Artist




**Catherine Steuer**  
steuer-catherine.com

**Software Used:**  
Photoshop

Catherine Steuer is a freelance digital illustrator based in France. After graduating in Graphic Design she decided to make a living from her painting skills and started to work independently.



# Paint like the masters: Rubens

Recreate the painting style of traditional master Peter Paul Rubens in your own work with this Photoshop guide by Catherine Steuer 





## Develop your style with this handy guide...

'Everything is a remix.' As artists, we have always been inspired by others, whether it is friends, artists we admire, or just random people. Rubens is not an exception to the rule, and was himself inspired by Michelangelo or Leonardo da Vinci.

In this tutorial, we are going to learn from the traditional art master, Peter Paul Rubens, and recreate a piece that will mimic his style, using Photoshop. The first step will be to analyze Rubens' style and understand how he was working with composition, colors and values. The second step will be to take his style over and create a piece from a sketch to a final painting, using just a few tips such as storytelling, posing the characters, and color and contrast corrections.

As digital artists, we will not proceed like Rubens who worked mainly with oil painting,

waiting for every layer to dry. We will learn to take advantage of the program to make sure that the painting fits his style while saving a lot of time. So grab your pen, launch your computer and let us get started!

**01 Analyze the master's work:** Peter Paul Rubens was a Flemish Baroque painter. He is well known for his Counter-Reformation altar pieces, portraits, landscapes, and historical paintings of mythological and allegorical subjects. By going through his work, I can easily understand his love for bright colors and strong contrasts. His historical and mythological paintings are full of movement and sensuality, turning his pieces into rich, living scenes. Those elements are what I am going to insert into my painting here.

Rubens also uses a lot of visible brushstrokes in his work. His style is strong and alive, as we can see in his portraits. I will therefore try to avoid developing a digital look by using only two brushes and no textures. ▶

## PRO TIP Thumbnails are the key

Many artists train by painting thumbnails. It helps to better understand the shapes and composition. While painting, feel free to compare your thumbnail to other paintings you would want your piece to be like. During the whole process, be sure to zoom out to see the overall look!

**01** Rubens' paintings have strong contrasts and lights, and the movement is always present even with static poses

Image courtesy National Gallery of Art, Washington





**02 Find a subject: storytelling:** For the subject, I decided to go with a mythological scene, telling the story of Athena bringing Pegasus as a gift to Bellerophon. In that case, my piece will contain some elements displayed in Rubens' paintings: a horse, drapery, and light.

In the meantime, I have a good story to tell. Storytelling in illustration, as in concept art, is one of the most important things. By looking at my piece, anyone should know that there is something going on, and that there is a whole story behind the painting. It isn't just a study.

**03 Looking for references:** Rubens had strong anatomy skills, and used these greatly in his paintings. His models were mostly fat or muscled, but I decided to go with a slimmer version which is easier for me to paint. As I am not a master in anatomy, I found some nice references which will perfectly fit my project and the story.

I find most of my references on bank images, as they are royalty free and not that expensive. Be careful when looking for references to always know where it comes from and if you have the right to use it. For small references such as fabrics, clothes or small details, I just Google what I need, as it won't be recognizable at all in the final piece.

**04 Preparatory sketching and composition:** I start sketching with what I have in mind and the references I have found. This preparatory sketch is to set up the composition and the characters' poses, and to see how it turns out in general. I like to put references together on my canvas before starting the sketch, and see how the composition works and if I need to make a few changes: this is the magic of Photoshop!

In this step I decide to change Athena's head which needs to be visible. I also change the horse position, which needs to be flying but looking at the characters at the same time and not at the end of the canvas. In this case I just flip his head. I sketch with two different layers, one for the characters and one for the background as it is easier for me to change and remove things.

**05 Detailed sketch:** Once I am happy with the overall composition of the image, I start detailing the sketch a little bit. I don't want to do this too much as I will add the small details while painting.

A lot of painters like to work without line sketching. I personally like to have a line view,



02



03





04

as well as guidance for when I start the colored sketch. I am still working with two different layers, which allow me to separate correctly the characters from the background.

While detailing I make a few changes again on the characters' positions. I also like to flip the canvas while sketching and painting. This tip helps me to have another look at the piece and see if there is something wrong I didn't see before!

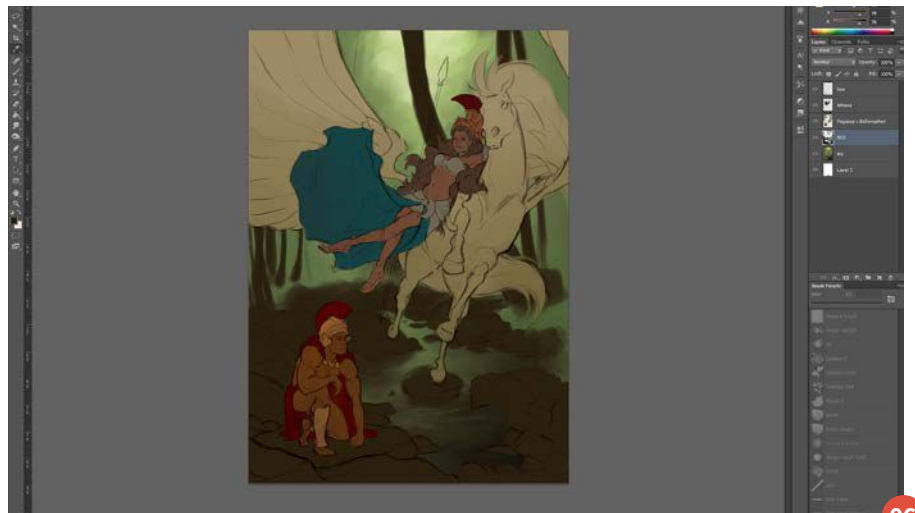
**06 Posing the colors:** Now it's time to paint! I like to start painting with darker colors, and then add the lights and darker shadows. I first pose the flat colors and see how it looks. I don't really care about the colors right now since I will change it later, but I use some that are close to what I have in mind.

In this step I merge the two sketch layers and add another on top. I use different color layers for the characters, and two for the background. This helps me separate some elements of the scenery. The water is then easy to set up, as for the background light – I will probably merge it later.

**07 Setting up the lights:** I start painting by adding some lights first, and see if it fits. Then I use shadows and a little bit of detailing. ▶



05



06

**02** Rubens' works have a story to tell so the paintings speak for themselves. The story behind the characters he creates is strong and easily understandable. Image courtesy the National Gallery of Art, Washington

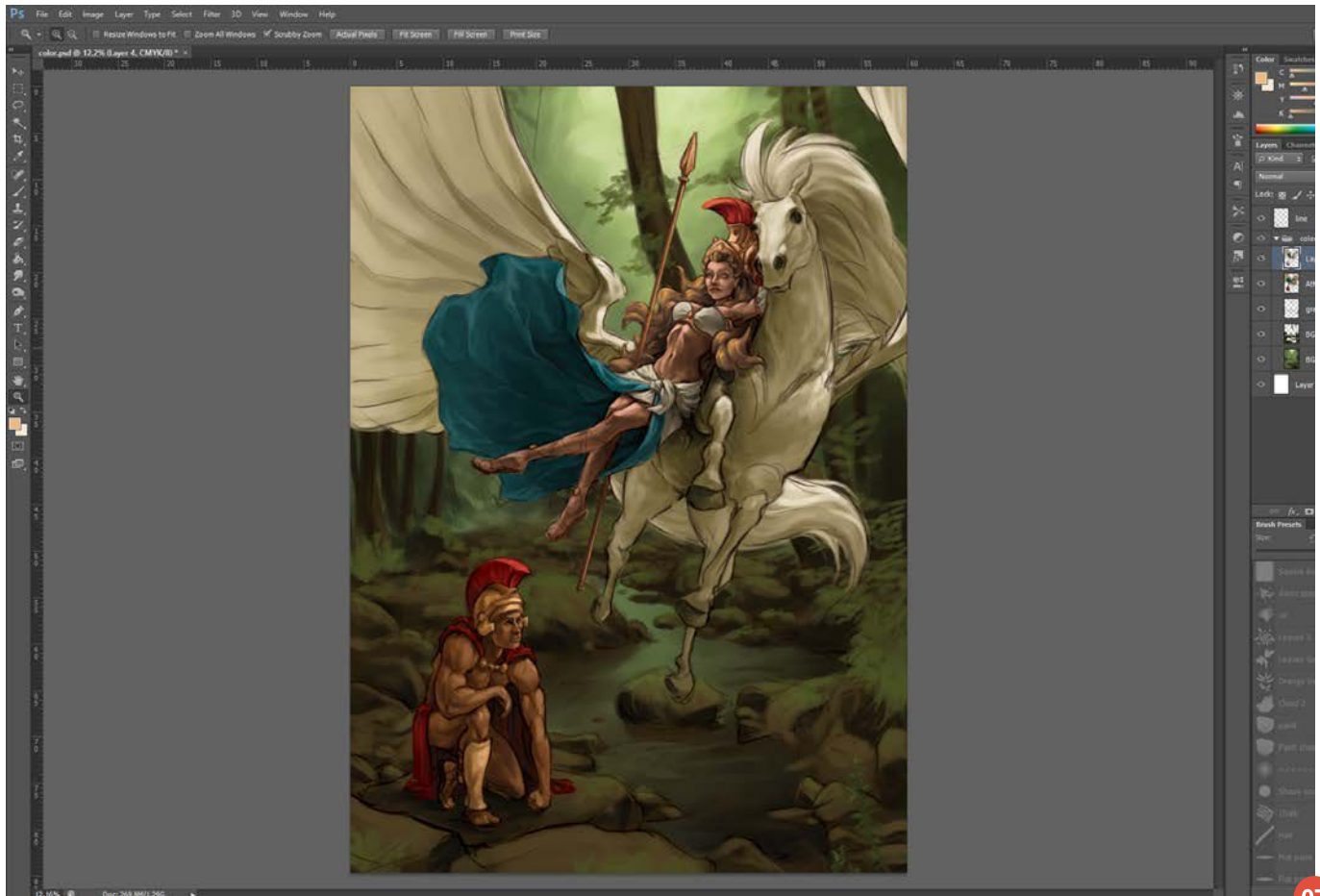
**03** The references are really important when it comes to painting: even with strong skills, you will always do better with a good model

**04** A preparatory sketch from references to see how the composition and characters work together. No need for details, just basic shapes!

**05** Detail the sketch, but not too much. This step helps to visualize the balance between background and characters

**06** Posing the colors while using different layers: it helps to make changes on the water and background light





**“I only use two brushes: a round soft one for Athena’s skin, and an oil paint brush for the rest”**

blend the characters’ layers and add one for the lights and shadows, so I can easily erase without impacting on the flat colors. I do the same for the background here!

Once again the colors are not that important but they need to stay close to what I envision for the final image if I don’t want to spend too much time on changing it later. I don’t detail too much in that step either, the important thing is to be sure that lights and shadows are good before going into any rough detail that I would have to change. I try not to zoom in too much to have an overall look on the painting, and I keep flipping the canvas!

**08 Adjusting colors and contrasts:** Once I have it quite good, I remove the line layer and start adjusting colors and contrasts. This part is the most important as it sets the mood and general feeling of the painting. The trick I use is to create a new layer and put it to Color mode instead of Normal.

I use a 40-percent or less Opacity brush; when I paint on this layer, the values don’t change but

## PRO TIPS

### Color mode layer

Create a new layer and change it into Color mode instead of Normal. Put it on top of all other layers. Once you paint on this layer, the colors get affected but not the values. You can easily change and control the colors.

### Detailing comes at the end

Be sure to feel good about the colors, shapes and values of your painting before going through any detailing process. It will be really complicated to change it once you paint it as you wanted. You don’t want to have to start over again.

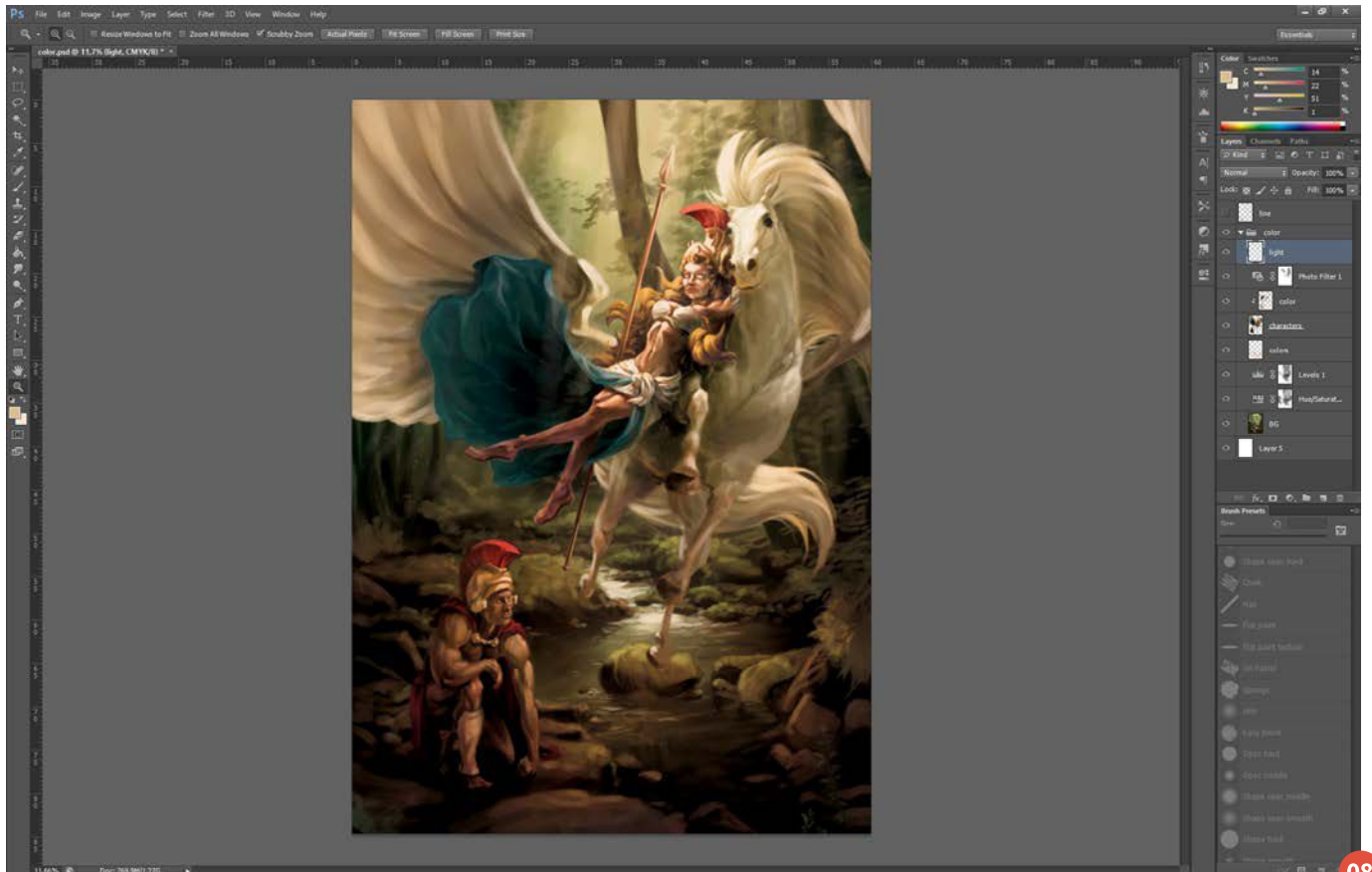
the colors do. I find it easier to control the colors in this way, and it gives a nice touch I find. I also put this layer right on top of the character ones that I blended earlier, and then create a Clipping mask. The color layer will affect only the character layer and not the background layers. I create another one for the background too. I try to get as close as it is possible to Rubens’ painting mood, and I also add some more contrasts and shadows with the adjustments layers, such as Levels and Hue/Saturation.

**09 Detailing:** Once the whole painting looks good to me while I look at it without zooming, I can start detailing. I only use two brushes: a round Soft one for Athena’s skin,

and an Oil Paint brush for the rest. I want to keep the painterly style that Rubens had, and I leave some brushstrokes visible for more sensibility to achieve this. I use the Color Picker tool to stay as close as possible to the previous colored sketch, and I zoom in and out a lot to see if it still looks great! I paint the details on another layer. This allows me to switch it from the visible to invisible, to see the progress of the painting from a sketch to the details.

**10 Final details:** Once I am done with detailing (it can take a while), I finally readjust the colors and contrasts. I make a few more changes until I feel good about it and decide to be done with it!



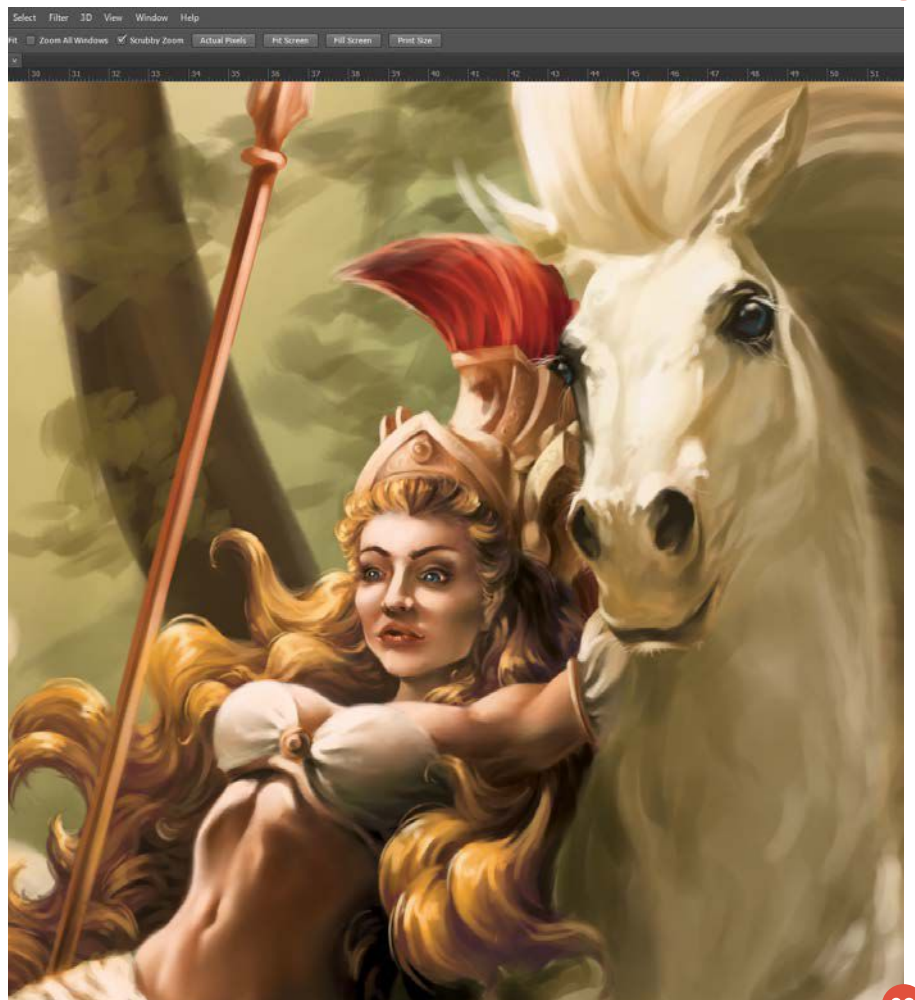


08

As I needed it to be in a Rubens-style painting, a good thing to do is to compare my painting thumbnail to thumbnails of Rubens' work. In this way I can see if the contrasts and shapes are similar, as well as the general colors. I sometimes use textures at the end of the painting process, but I don't want the piece to look digital. I will skip this step and go straight to the final details!

Well now that you know everything about painting like Peter Paul Rubens using Photoshop, go create your own masterpiece, and have fun doing it! ●

- 07** Add general lights and shadows to see how it works and don't detail too much right now either
- 08** General colors and contrast are really important. It needs to be set up correctly before going through the details
- 09** Detailing is the most fun part of the process. You will start to see what the piece will really look like



09



## The Artist



**Catherine Steuer**  
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## The Artists



**Juan Novelletto**  
novelletto.com.ar

**Software Used:**  
Photoshop

Juan Novelletto is from Buenos Aires, Argentina, and is a senior concept artist at NGD Studios and art director at indie games studio Nastycloud.



**Ignacio Bazán Lazcano**

artstation.com/  
artist/neisbeis

**Software Used:**  
Photoshop

Ignacio Bazán Lazcano, from Buenos Aires, is art director at NGD Studios. He is also a concept artist for Legendary entertainment.



# Create a dynamic exosuit scene

Juan Novelletto and Ignacio Bazán Lazcano demonstrate how to design a sci-fi exosuit from basic shape to completed dynamic scene in this in-depth tutorial [▶](#)





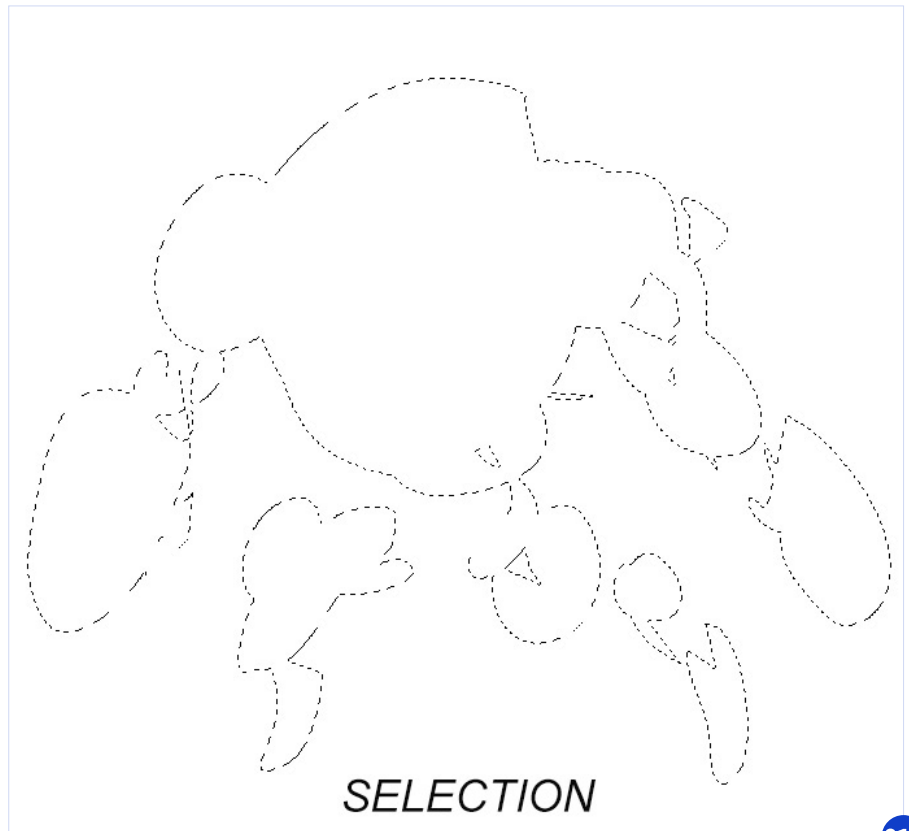
## Juan Novelletto begins the collaborative process...

In this tutorial we are going to create the concept of a mech with a pilot from scratch, finishing the tutorial with an illustration to put our mech in action. The aim of this concept is to be the first stage of creation in the process of production for a 3D model. We will cover its creation from shape exploration to the development of the mech in its entirety. We use this process because it is one of the most common in the entertainment industry, an example being the videogames industry (the industry in which we specialize).

The concept artist is responsible for bringing the general idea of how a character will look and act, and the 3D artist interprets this information to create the final result. However, in this process it is common that concessions are allowed, and the final model varies from the original concept, but that's the idea! Being a creative process with many iterations, it is normal that the original form may suffer modifications, although it is important that the concept is as clear as possible so that no shape could be misinterpreted, which we will stress throughout the entire tutorial.

Within the tutorial we are going to find ourselves with three very important stages. These are the exploration of the design, the realization of the concept with some details, and an illustration that will reinforce the idea of the chosen concept. As a primary tool we will use Photoshop, and see various techniques to streamline the process of creation and exploration.

**01 Exploration of the basic shape:** Even though there is more than one way to deal with a design, one of my favorites is starting very loose, and abstractly: playing with shapes, spots, silhouettes, and so on. In this case I use the Lasso tool in Photoshop and generate selections



01a

(Fig. 1a) then fill them with a dark value (Fig. 1b). For this I don't tie myself to anything other than a very vague idea, such as where the legs and arms would be placed, and how the rest of the body would be. Now that I have several of these 'stains', I'm going to start looking for more defined shapes. Using only three values for this, I paint volumes, define the forms clearly and play with the design (Fig. 1c).

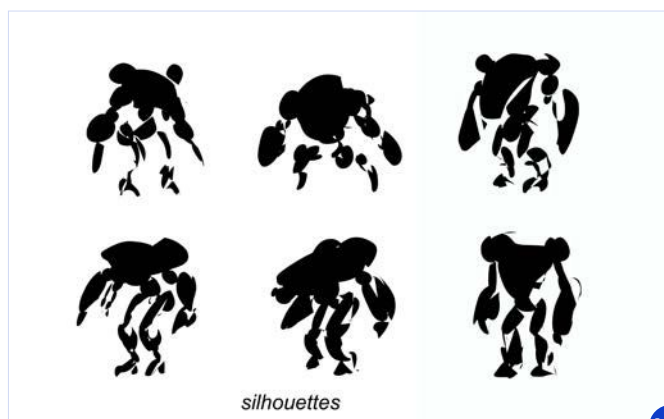
At this stage I work with thumbnails. This way I do not concentrate on details but on the general form. This process can be infinite, so I recommend you do not devote more than 5-10 minutes to each thumbnail, and finish once you are pleased with what you have got. The main idea of this process is to generate an amount of thumbnails so we have variety when the time to choose a design comes.

**02 General thumbnail design:** I already have enough thumbnails, and I will choose one that allows me to play with the design and which I find original, since it is very common in the exploration stage to fall in standards of design. ▶

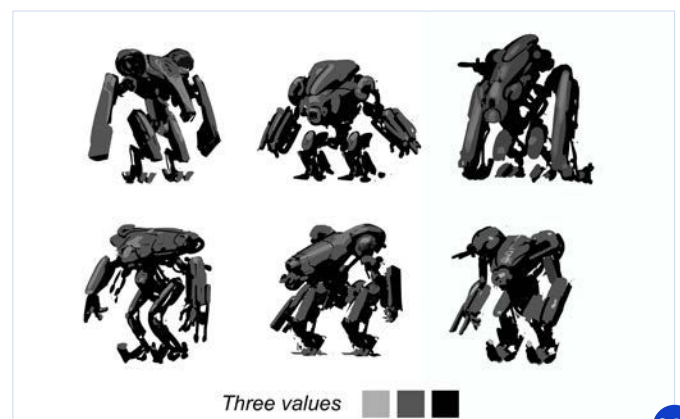
**01a** Use the Lasso tool to generate sections

**01b** Fill the sections with a dark value to create silhouettes

**01c** Define the forms of the silhouettes using only three values



01b



01c



I enlarge the thumbnail and start again to find shapes, but this time with more values and defining the line better. In my case, even at this stage, I start with spots, and I keep refining these to generate volumes (Fig. 2a). It can be compared to having a block of marble and starting to sculpt and find forms.

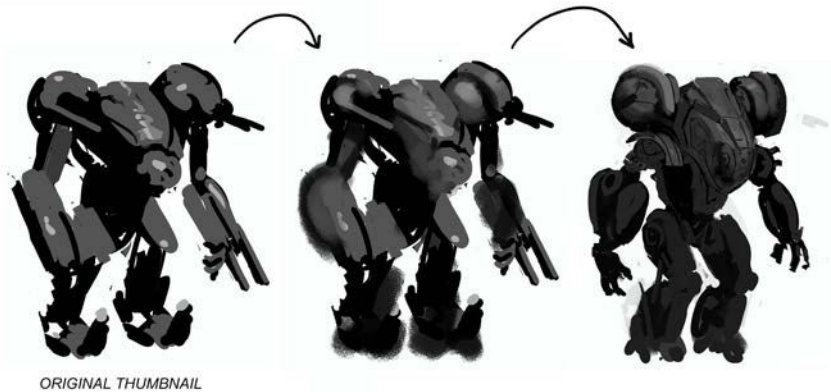
Still at this stage there is no need to fall into anything too technical, such as perspective, but keep looking for the design. However, I highly recommend you flip the canvas constantly so that you can see the figure in a different way and thus find errors that tend to appear in the early stages of the concept. I'm going to adjust the posture of the mech here since the legs are not well placed, using the Transform tool and then the option, Warp (Fig. 2b).

**03 Final design in values:** With the thumbnail already bigger and more defined, I'm going to polish the details and shapes, but without touching the lighting or color. I will work only on values, and get lost in nothing more than the design. Remember that it is very important to have defined the design before jumping ahead and putting in lights and effects!

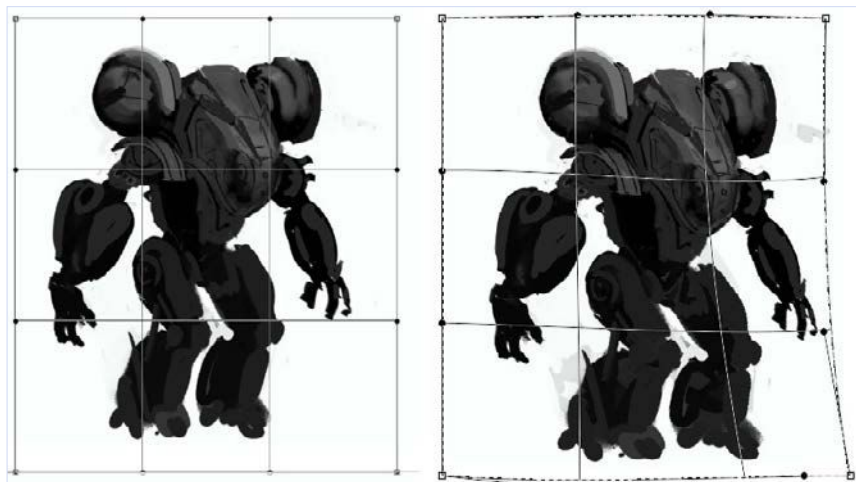
What I do is similar to the previous step, but every time it is iterated in smaller forms. As a main rule, you should go from the general to the particular; from shapes and volumes to the smallest ones. Now I use Hard brushes, since they allow me to define and generate good contours (Fig. 3).

At this time, it is important to use references from other artists or photos, for example, military vehicles, weapons, and aircrafts, to give you ideas that could improve your design. I conclude this

- Keep refining the thumbnail shape to create volume



02a



- Correct any early mistakes, such as the leg here using the Transform tool and Warp

02b

stage by emphasizing materials and adding a couple of lights.

**04 Color, details and illumination:** We already have our robot with a shape and details defined, but still only on values. This stage is quite fun, because it allows us to play

with materials and begin to give materiality to our design. I put in an imaginary light and in this step, I further the volumes of our mech, playing with shadows and reflective areas. In addition to the light, I give a first layer of color, choosing the color that is going to dominate. Here you have to make a decision about what you want to



- Generate contours using Hard brushes



03



convey, since color plays a very important role at a communication level. For example, if you paint it red the character would look more aggressive (not counting the shape itself) and it would stand out too much. So I'm going to keep it more conservative and I am going to use a cold and desaturated color as the predominant color (Fig. 4a). The simplest way to add one color dyeing to the values is by adding a layer with the blend mode Color.

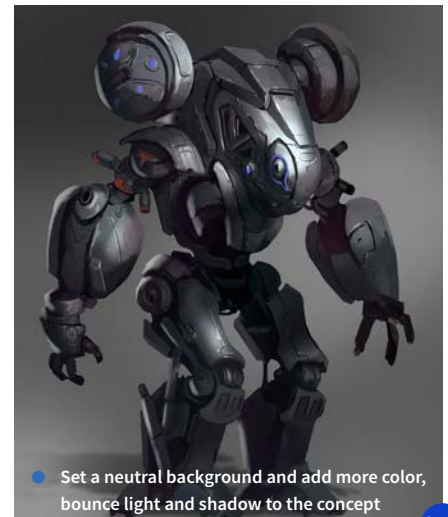
Now it is time to remove the white background, and place the character in a space where the shadow is going to be projected (this will help us to understand the light source). Although it is not a main rule, I like to use gray as a background for this type of concept, since its neutrality does not affect the perception of the mech. Then I add some more colors, bouncing lights and more realistic shadows so that the design is almost ready (Fig. 4b).

**05 Design of the pilot:** Now it is time to design the pilot who will be using the exosuit. When I make this type of concept I like to add everything I can to make the concept clearer and reinforce the design. Following the same technique I used in the previous steps (but with less iteration in the design) I define a basic shape for the pilot (Fig. 5a). ▶

- Choose a light direction and the dominant color in your work



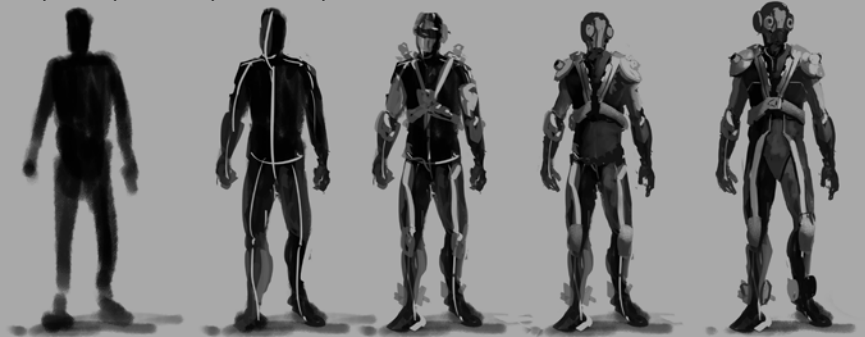
04a



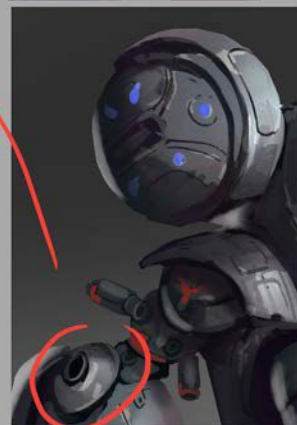
- Set a neutral background and add more color, bounce light and shadow to the concept

04b

- Repeat the previous steps to create a pilot for the exosuit

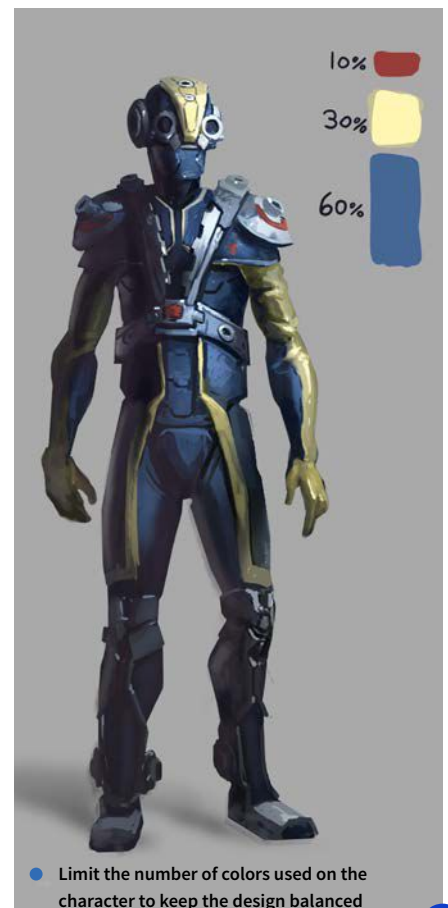


05a



- Think about how the character will fit into the final design and how to make the new concept functional

05b



- Limit the number of colors used on the character to keep the design balanced

05c





06

For the design I have in mind the pilot travels within our mech! This is a good start to thinking about the design because we have to take the functionality into account to make it coherent. In addition, I repeat shapes from the mech on the armor of our pilot (Fig. 5b). To reinforce the design, repeat the forms. This is very important when developing an idea that covers for example, a world, character or vehicle. For the colors of the costume I like to keep it in three tones, maintaining a ratio of 60%, 30% and 10% (Fig. 5c).

## 06 Template with close-ups and details:

Now the robot and pilot are ready. You just need to leave everything presented in a template so that the illustration can be started. First of all it is important to think what information you want to show, where, and what to leave free for another artist to interpret.

In my personal experience I've had to make templates with all the orthogonal views and some of them with a single view, where the 3D artist who faced it got their share of design where I could not reach. This is one of the options which I prefer since creative work does not end at the concept, but it is only a part (a very important one) of the final design.

I like to highlight firstly, the scale of the robot in comparison to the pilot. On the other hand I also like to present close-ups of any detail; in this case

the pilots face. To close the concept I'm going to suggest a way in which the pilot could be placed and how the cabin is going to open (Fig. 6).

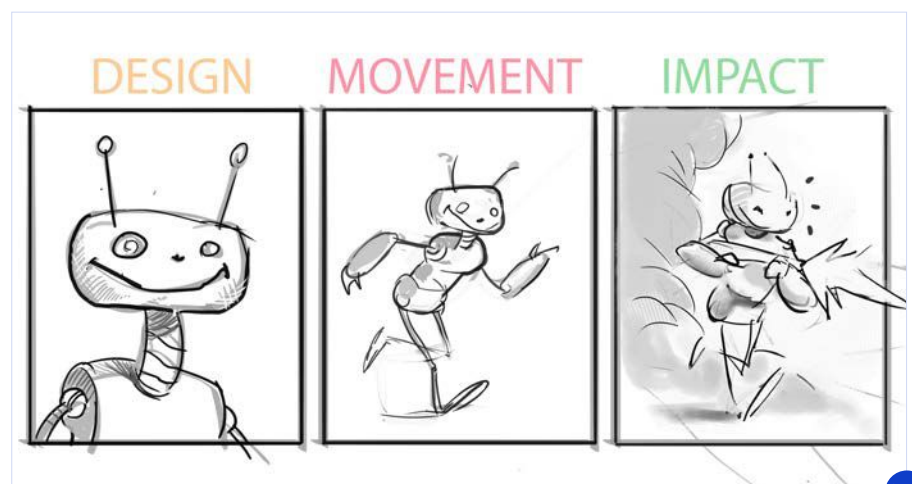
## Ignacio Bazán Lazcano continues the process...

**07 The illustration:** Usually when we work on games or big budget films, a more detailed final concept is usually done to mark some key important frames.

Based on thumbnails and final designs presented in a simple schematic or model sheet, you can make an illustration that serves more to show how the design works within a game or film

universe. Before thinking about the scene, it is necessary to note a couple of things first. The image must be very good, showing the design, have movement, and above all it has to have an impact at first sight (Fig. 7a).

The way I work is always very varied. I often start a drawing using lines and sometimes through spots (Fig. 7b). When I need to draw complex things like action scenes I usually use a lot of spot, especially to compose the scene. First I place the object in the plane and then work on its form (Fig. 7c). Once I can see the scene in my mind, what I do is lower the opacity level of the line drawing layer. Then in a new layer I use line to better define and adjust the design and proportions of my



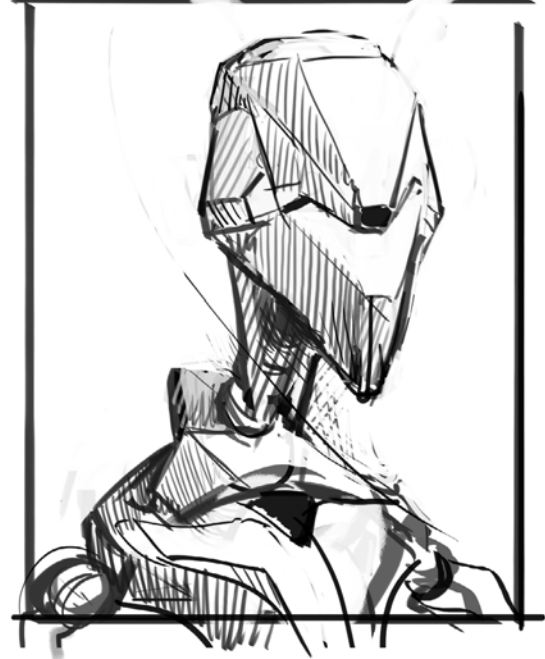
07a



## STAINS



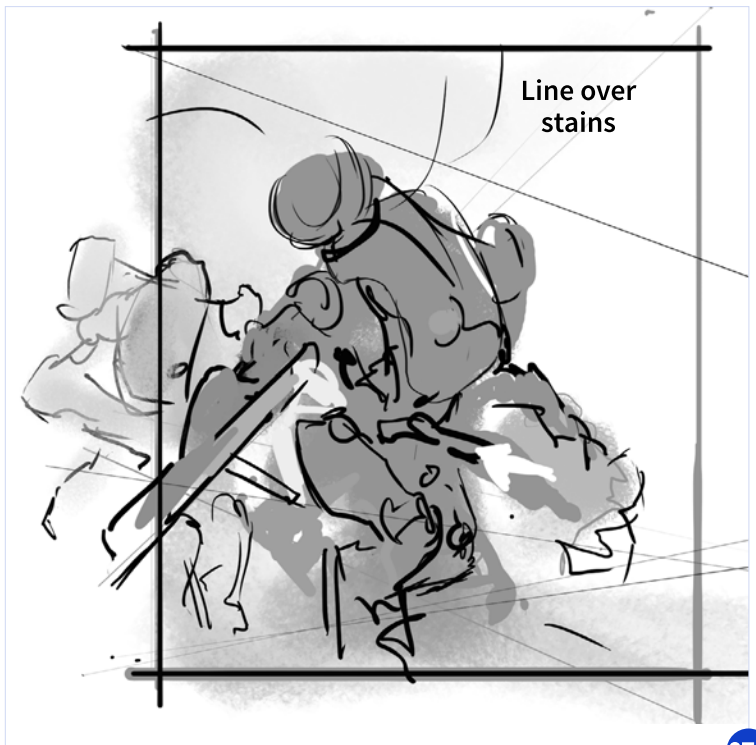
## LINES



07b



07c



07d

drawing (Fig. 7d). Finally what I get is an excellent thumbnail or sketch from which I can start working on the definitive base of my painting.

**08 Color palette:** Thinking about what colors to use for a painting is not an easy task. The great advantage of digital art is that it allows you to experiment in a fast way with any kind of variation without making irremovable mistakes. I always think in colors which would let ▶

**06** To finish the concept design stage it is useful to show important close-ups and how the character fits inside the mech

**07a** The three key components of a good scene are design, movement and impact

**07b** Initial drawings can be done in a number of ways including lines and stains

**07c** To compose a scene, place the object on a plane and develop its form

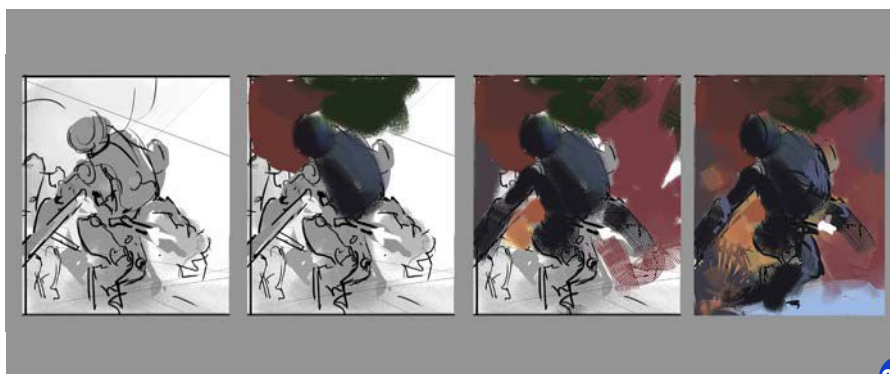
**07d** Reduce the opacity of the line drawing then adjust and define the drawing in a new layer



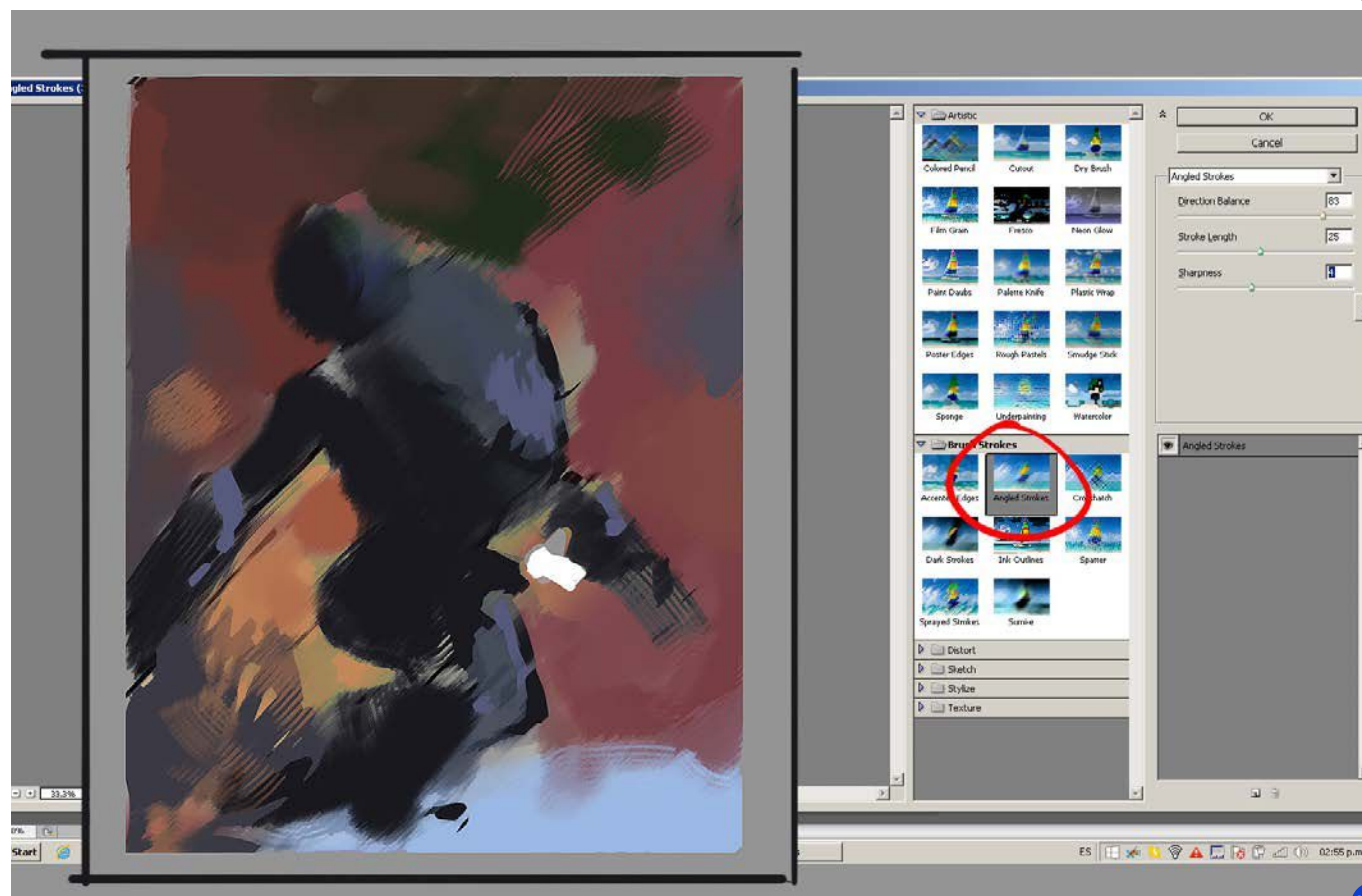
me achieve a good contrast and sell the drawing better. The idea is not to make more noise, but to try to improve the reading of the composition, accompany the design with color and light and make it stand out.

If you have some spare time you can make little color tests painting with color spots over the sketch (Fig. 8a).

Once we are done painting with spots, we can achieve a better mix of colors applying a



08a



08b



08c



Photoshop filter (Filter > Filter Gallery > Angled strokes). This type of filter mixes color and, at the same time, adds textures and new color to the drawing. I did three color palette options and ended with the third one (Fig. 8c)

**09 Simplify:** Once we have the drawing, design, composition and colors defined, what's left is to start painting.

I always recommend trying to simplify the forms of the objects to light and render them in a precise way. If you observe the design of the robot from a more simplified view you can understand

its essence better and take the drawing to its basic forms (geometric forms). This is the simplest way to understand how to paint and give

volume with the brush following the light source (Fig. 9b). This image reminds me of an episode of *The Simpson's*, when Marge tries to paint ▶

**08a** If there is time, make a few color tests for the scene

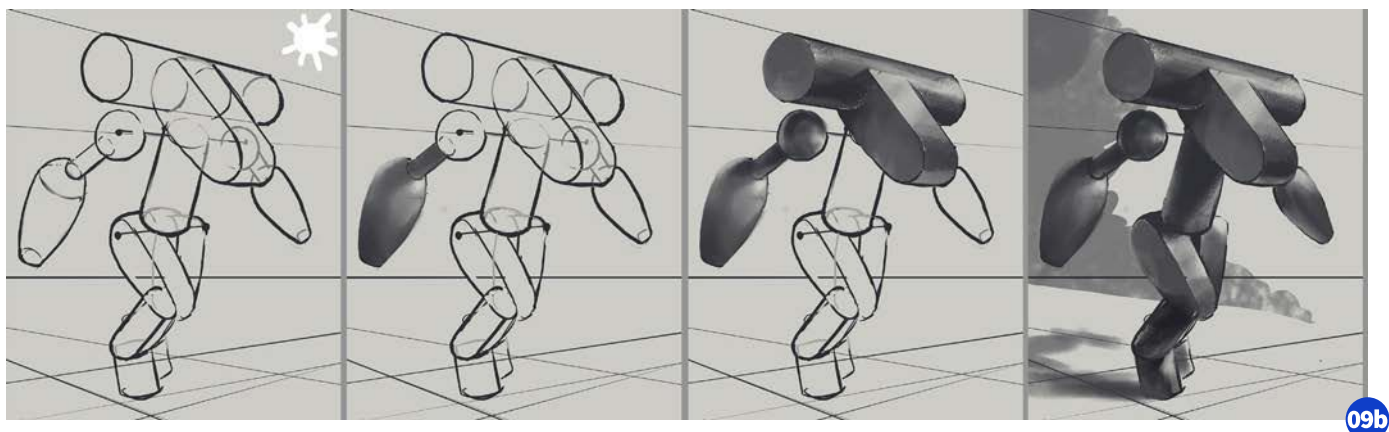
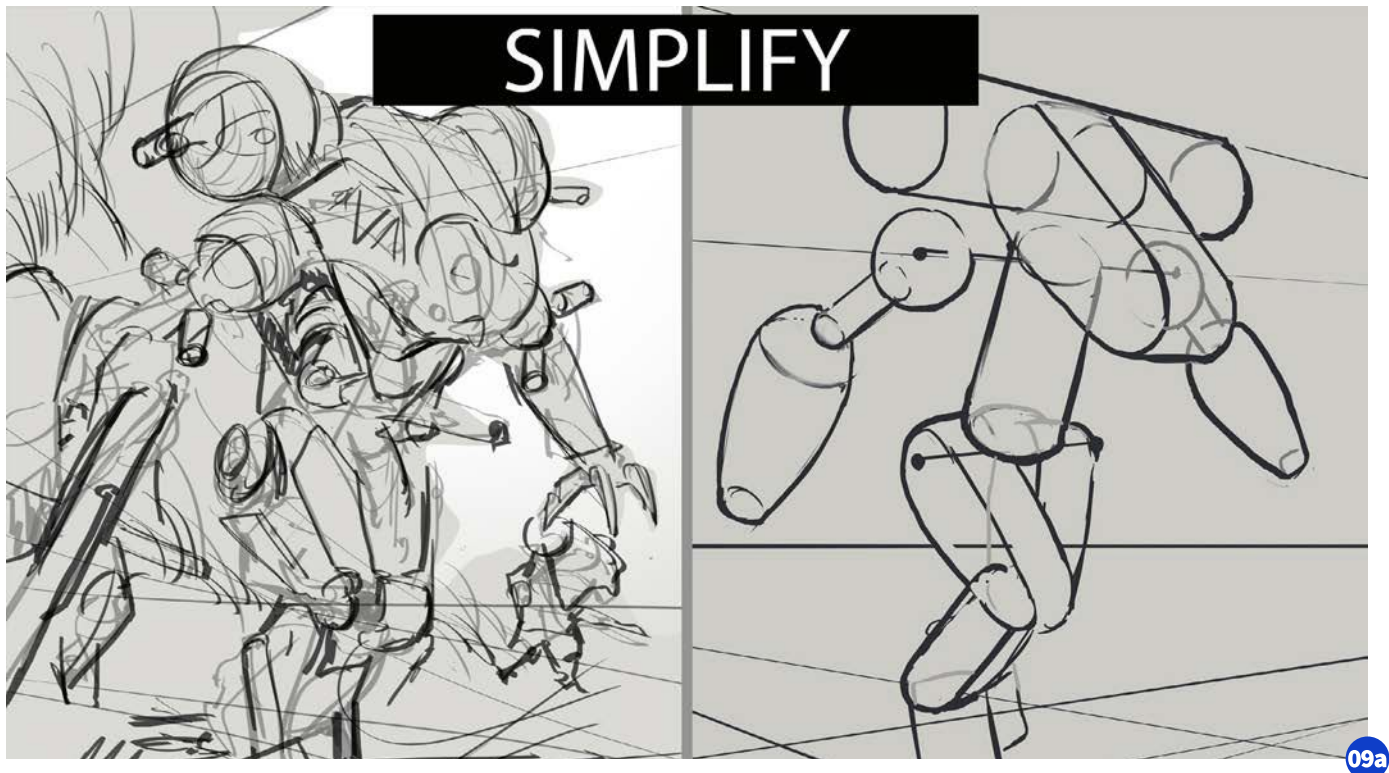
**08b** Use a filter to mix the chosen colors together

**08c** Repeat this a few times with different color palettes until you achieve a scheme you are happy with

**09a** Simplifying the composition makes it easier to render with light and shadow

**09b** Use basic geometric shapes to build up the light and shade on an object

**09c** These simple forms can then be developed back into the original concept design







10a



10b



10c



10d

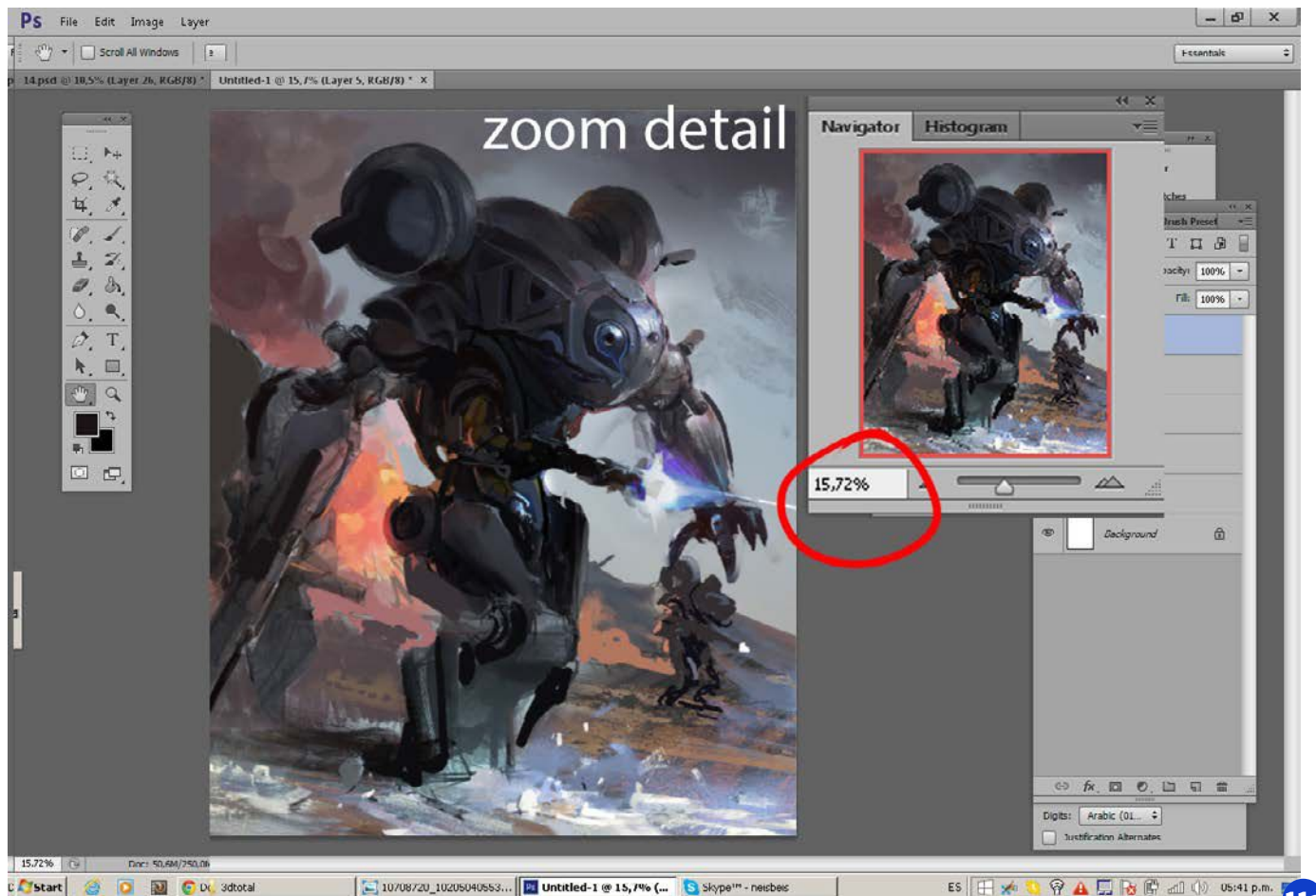
**“If the image is understandable from far away, and if the thumbnail in the navigator is readable, then it’s almost sure that the image will be a success”**

Homer and she imagines him with geometric forms. If you can paint cylinders, cones, cubes and spheres you can paint anything (Fig. 9c).

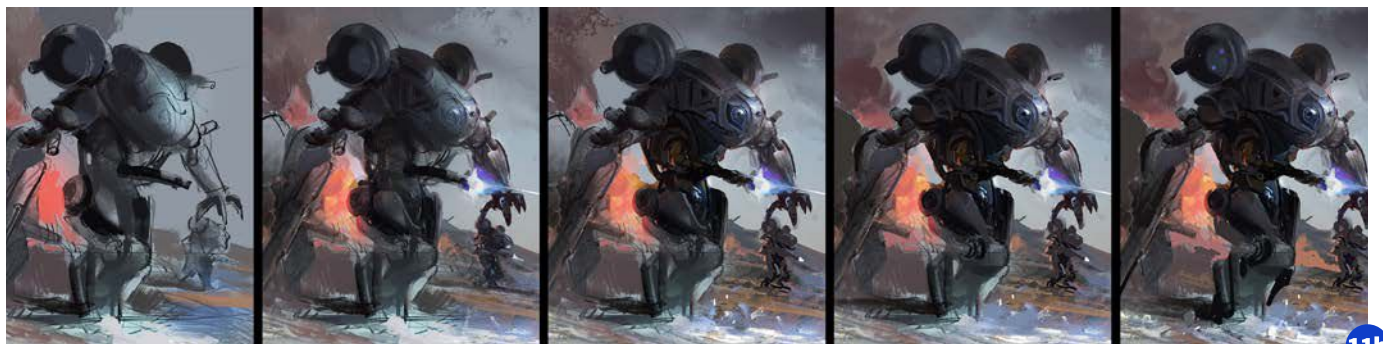
You can also add more details to these simple forms and combine many of these geometric figures, so you’ll be able to design anything.

**10** **Color:** To start painting I always use a base color, in this case a blue with some gray by adding a new layer and applying Multiply (Fig. 10a). When you paint something so complex and full of details like a robot or a vehicle, it is easier to lose yourself in the details. However, if you work volume first with just one color the





11a



11b

process will be easier. I'm going to start using the third color sketch as a reference. With Color Picker I pick every color of the sketch and apply it to the final drawing (Fig. 10c).

Following the light sources you will be able to render properly. The ideal thing is not to have more than two light sources, but in this case I added three (Fig. 10d). I made the most of the light sources to better separate the robot from the background. With the light of the blast I separate the character from the background and with the lens flare of the weapon I can better set out the face and left arm.

**11 Paint in the scene:** Little by little, and with a lot of patience, I will paint the whole scene. Try to always see the whole drawing

and don't work on details until you reach at least 70% of the final painting. Watching the picture in its entirety I am going to detail every area; upgrading the level of detail in the areas where I want to lead the eye (Fig. 11a).

When thinking about painting and detail, always take into account that if the image is understandable from far away, and if the thumbnail in the navigator is readable, then it's almost sure that the image will be a success. ▶

**10a** In a new layer apply a blue-gray base color

**10b** Begin with marking out where the light and shadow will fall to define the volume of the objects

**10c** Choose one of the previous color sketches to work from and use Color Picker to select the correct colors

**10d** Different light sources can be used to help define key areas of the composition

**11a** Keep a watch on the overall look of the image, focus on the details which will lead the eye around the room

**11b** You can see over a series of screenshots how the image is gradually built up



**12 Final Details:** When do you know that the painting is done? It is necessary to observe the whole drawing, compare all the areas and identify what matters the most at the polishing stage. I almost always try to detail all the zones where the light travels; that is where the image is naturally going to lead the eye. If you detail only a pair of focal points you will achieve a better final impact and most importantly you are going to prevent the drawing from getting overloaded with unnecessary details. The good thing about this is that it saves time and the result is much better (Fig. 12a).

**13 FX:** I leave FX for the end almost every time. For this I usually use Photoshop filters or a texture/photo to maximize the level of detail and the realism of the painting. For example, in the case of the weapon that's shooting, we can utilize a combination of techniques to achieve a realistic shooting effect.

First I look for any photo on the internet that has shooting effects, like 'shooting machine gun' (Fig. 13a), and once I find it, I paste the photo in a new layer over the area we want to work on. I recommend you try to find textures that are placed over a black background; this will make the photo blending process much easier.

After the photo is placed change the layer blend mode to Lighten, this mode makes the background of the photo disappear and leaves the lit part visible (Fig. 13a). To make the photo well integrated into the painting it is necessary to paint the missing areas with a brush, accentuating the highlights and contrasts.

A final piece of advice: ideas are the most important thing here, technique can be learned with some practice, but in the end what really

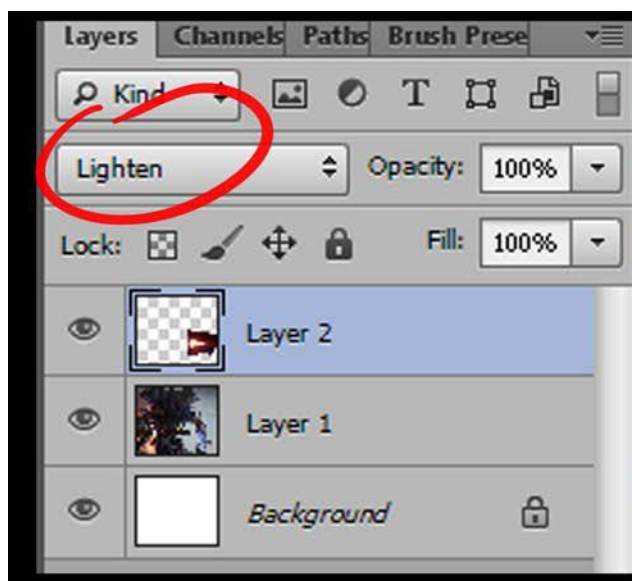


12

**12** The areas where the light hits are the most important to detail as they lead the eye around the image

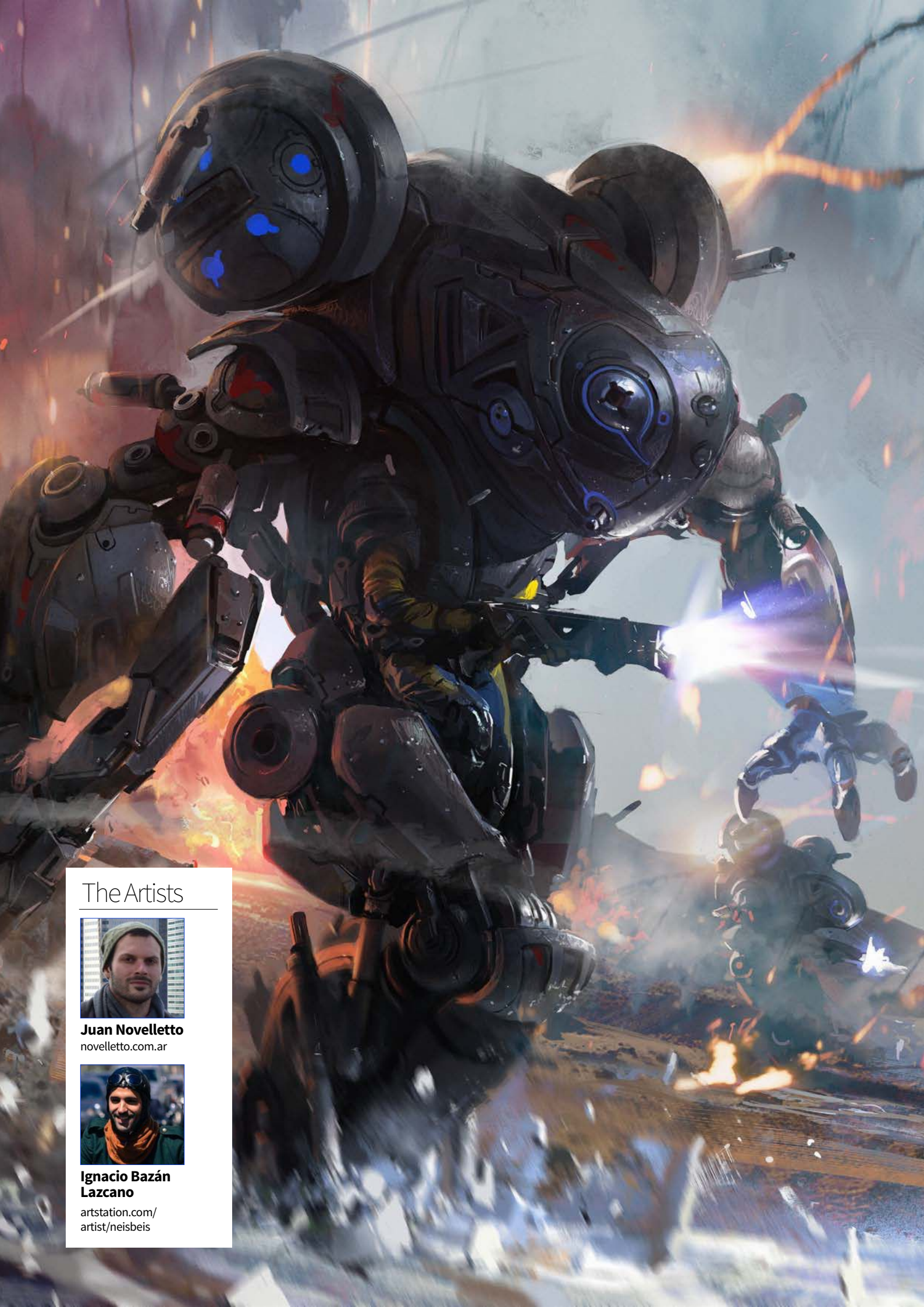
**13** Use a photo texture with the Layer blend mode to quickly create FX

matters is what you are capable of creating. Again, this matters the most when generating ideas and being creative. If you are capable of managing the technique and creativity you are going to be able to work in this beautiful entertainment industry forever. ●



13





## The Artists



**Juan Novelletto**  
[novelletto.com.ar](http://novelletto.com.ar)



**Ignacio Bazán  
Lazcano**  
[artstation.com/  
artist/neisbeis](http://artstation.com/artist/neisbeis)

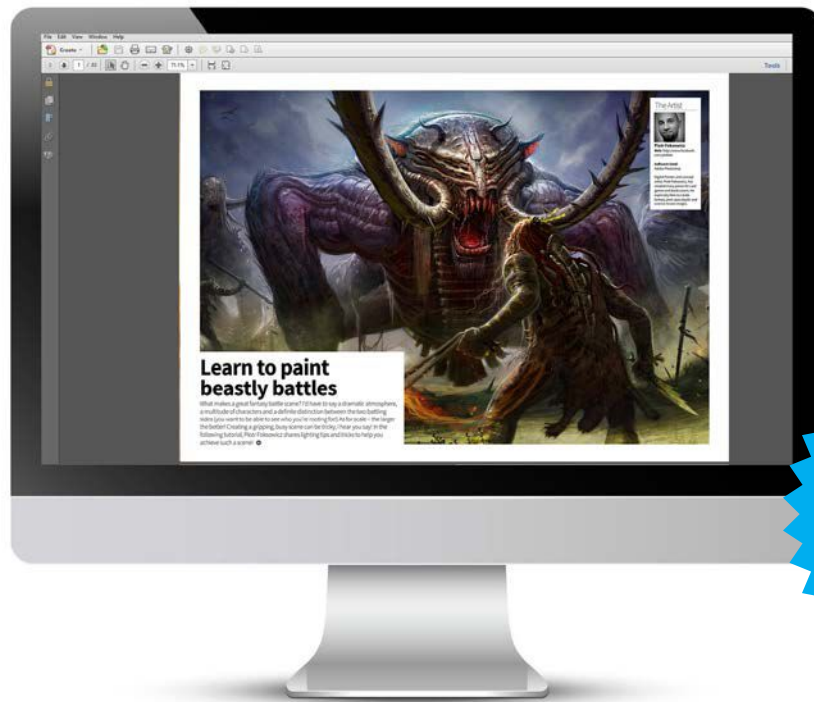


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## The Artist



**Donglu Yu**

[artofdonglu.wix.com/home](http://artofdonglu.wix.com/home)

**Software Used:**

Photoshop

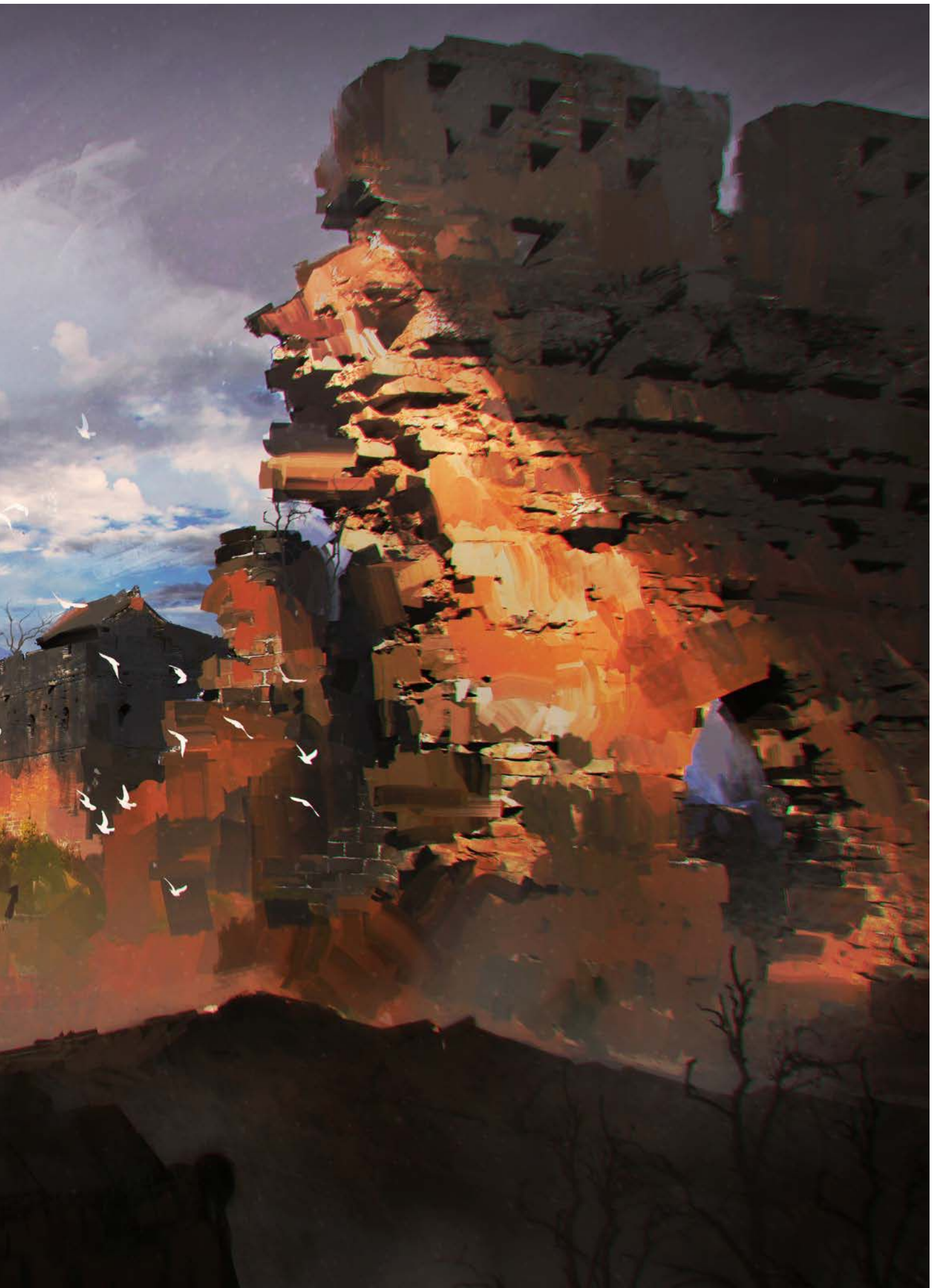
Donglu Yu is a senior concept artist working at Warner Brothers Games, Montreal. She has worked on games including *Assassin's Creed*, *Far Cry 4* and *Deus Ex: Human Revolution*.



# Speed paint an historical landscape

Senior concept artist Donglu Yu gives tips on how to paint a historical landscape in two hours using custom shapes and value studies [▶](#)







## Challenge yourself with this quick project...

I will guide you through a historical landscape speed painting process with a step by step approach. The key to success for a speed painting is to capture the essence of your theme within very limited time constraints. This requires you to be very familiar with the chosen subject and also your ability to use iconic shapes to portray such a theme. Such familiarity can be obtained by two methods: years of experience of observation, and careful studies of any available image references. Once you are ready, then you can switch to the technical aspects of speed paintings.

I will take this opportunity to share with you a few tricks of how to come up with composition

variations quickly and efficiently by using custom brushes and shapes. Furthermore, the importance of value relationships will be elaborated within this article. I will equally discuss the use of ambiance to enhance the mood of the painting. Furthermore, lighting knowledge will be brought up which would allow you to have a better control of color temperature to portray depth. The article will end with a few tricks on how to tighten up the whole image, including the edge treatment and camera effects.

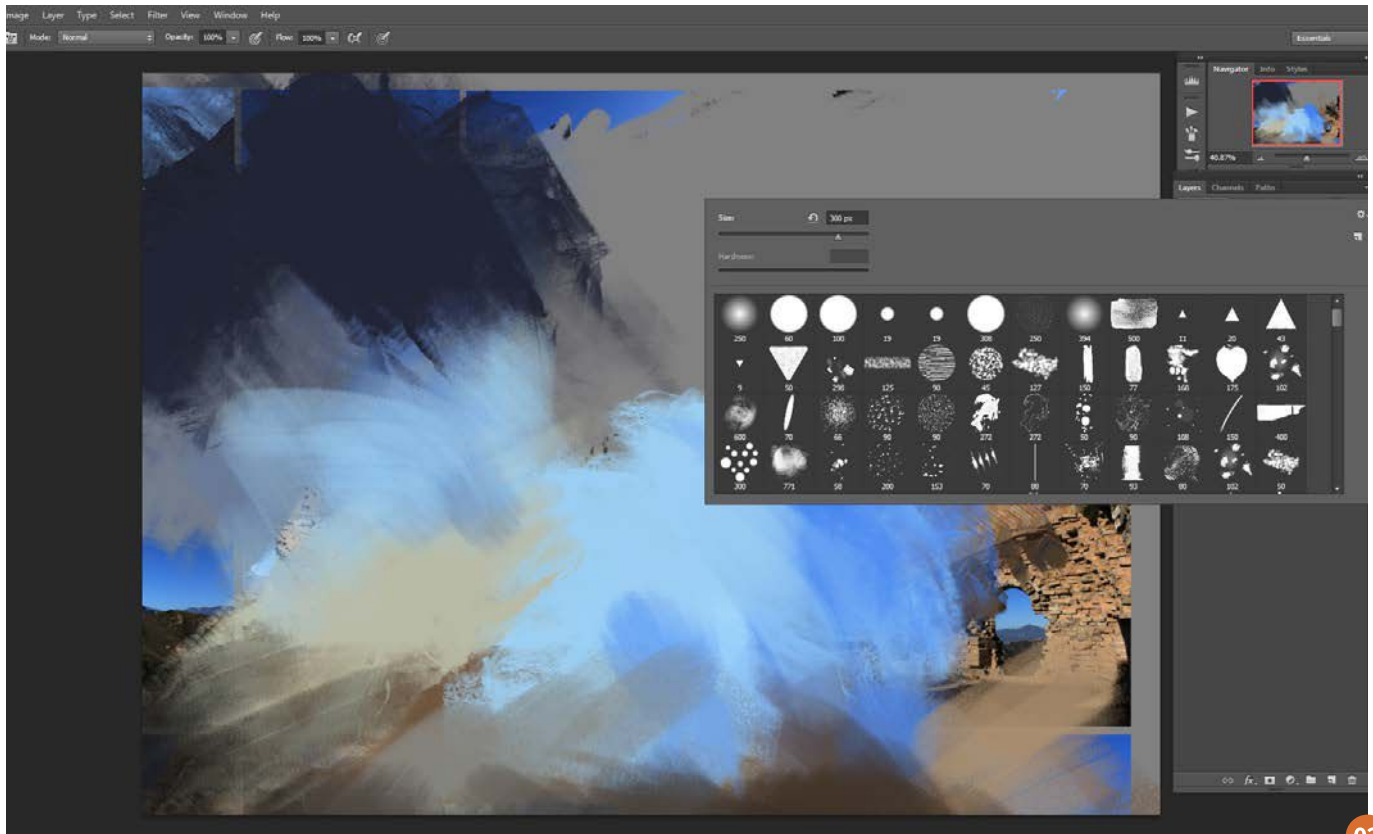
Throughout the article, I will do my best to explain not only how to apply certain techniques, but also the reason behind the practice of those techniques. I firmly believe that once you can achieve a logical understanding of your painting approaches,

the technical aspects will become a natural part of you. Therefore you will be able to spend your time and energy more effectively on both the creative and the design aspects of the artworks.

**01 Reference gathering:** The best way to gather your references is still by taking your own pictures. It can be high-end shots with a professional camera or simply with your phone or tablet on your way to work. It takes a lot of time and energy to collect them over the years, but it will eventually pay off in the long run. Other alternatives can be using Google Images or websites such as Flickr to build your visual memory of a specific theme. The downside is that the copyright issues remain present with other people's photos. If you are willing to pay a small amount of membership fee, [www.textures.com](http://www.textures.com) is







## PRO TIP

### Keeping the silhouettes clean

Keeping the silhouettes clean has two layers of meaning: keeping the shapes themselves clean, but also keeping their Photoshop layers clean, separated and named.

I am not a very organized person when it comes to the layers in Photoshop, but those shape layers can also be served as masks later, so you will be able to have clean and quick selections.



still one of my favorite places to gather copyright free photo references.

**02 Warming up with brushes:** I always like to warm up with some custom brushes before starting the actual painting session. Depending on the chosen theme, I keep a limited selection of brushes for the speed painting process. It forces you to spend your time more

efficiently thinking about shapes and designs instead of struggling to decide which brushes to use to achieve any specific brushstrokes.

You can also map your limited brush-set to some keyboard hotkeys, such as F1, F2, F3, and so on. It can take a little while for you to get used to it, but this hotkey mapping can save you the time of right clicking to pick up a specific brush from the menu. ►

**01a** Reference gathering is crucial for you to gain familiarity of specific themes

**01b** Make a large visual bank from the many resources available to you

**02** Working with a limited range of brushes can allow you to gain speed and to concentrate more on the design aspect

02



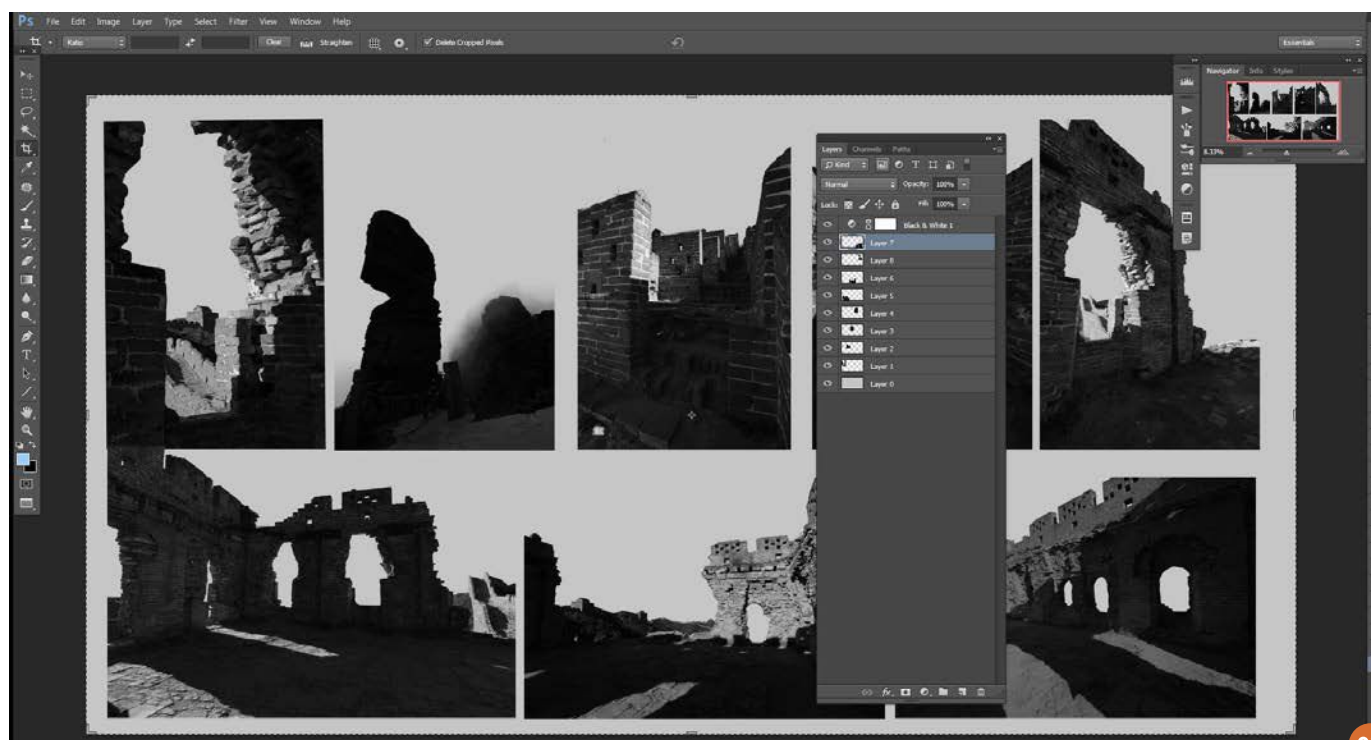
**03 Select iconic shapes:** Shapes are key design elements for making relevant and interesting compositions. The first step of gathering and studying reference is now serving this purpose well. I usually open a large blank canvas in Photoshop and copy-and-paste all the interesting shapes for my theme on it.

It is important to understand that shape is also silhouette, so I am taking this opportunity to set up a solid foundation for the future composition

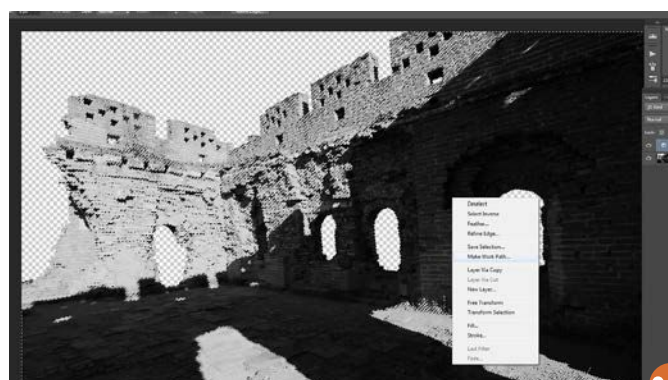
possibilities. I also like to visualize my shapes as grayscale graphic elements against a light-gray background, so I can better judge their readability and their relevance. I prefer to use the non-destructive adjustment layer for the desaturation purpose, so I can still keep all the original textures for later use.

**04 Creation of custom shapes:** The use of custom shapes is my favorite alternative to custom brushes. They can be applied much

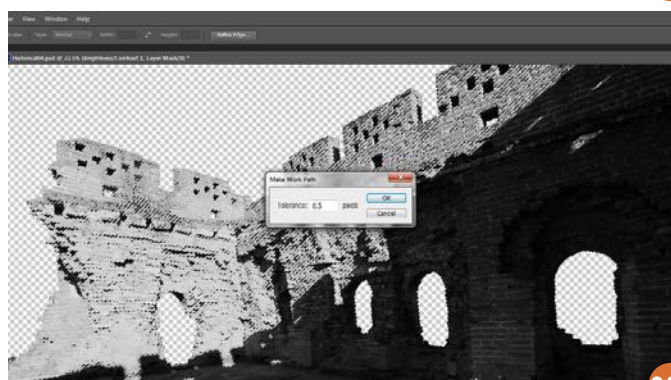
faster on the canvas to generate nearly endless possibilities for the composition. Here is how to make a custom shape based on your previous shape selection: go to the channel tab, select any color channel that will give you the best contrast, press M on the keyboard, right-click, then select 'Make Work Path...' with a tolerance of 0.5. Then go to Edit and click on 'Define Custom Shape...'; now the shape is ready for use when you click on the Custom Shape tool on your toolbar. Press-and-drag the shape to have fun with it. The



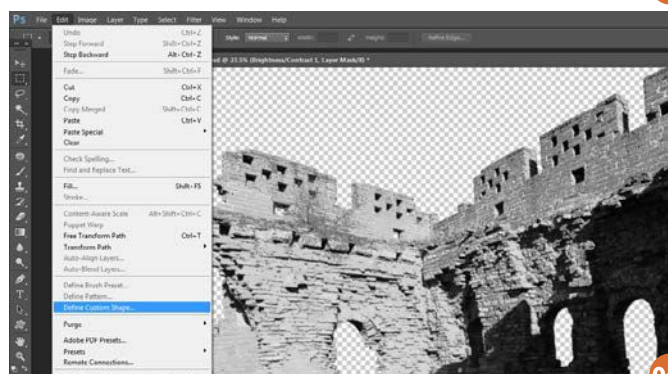
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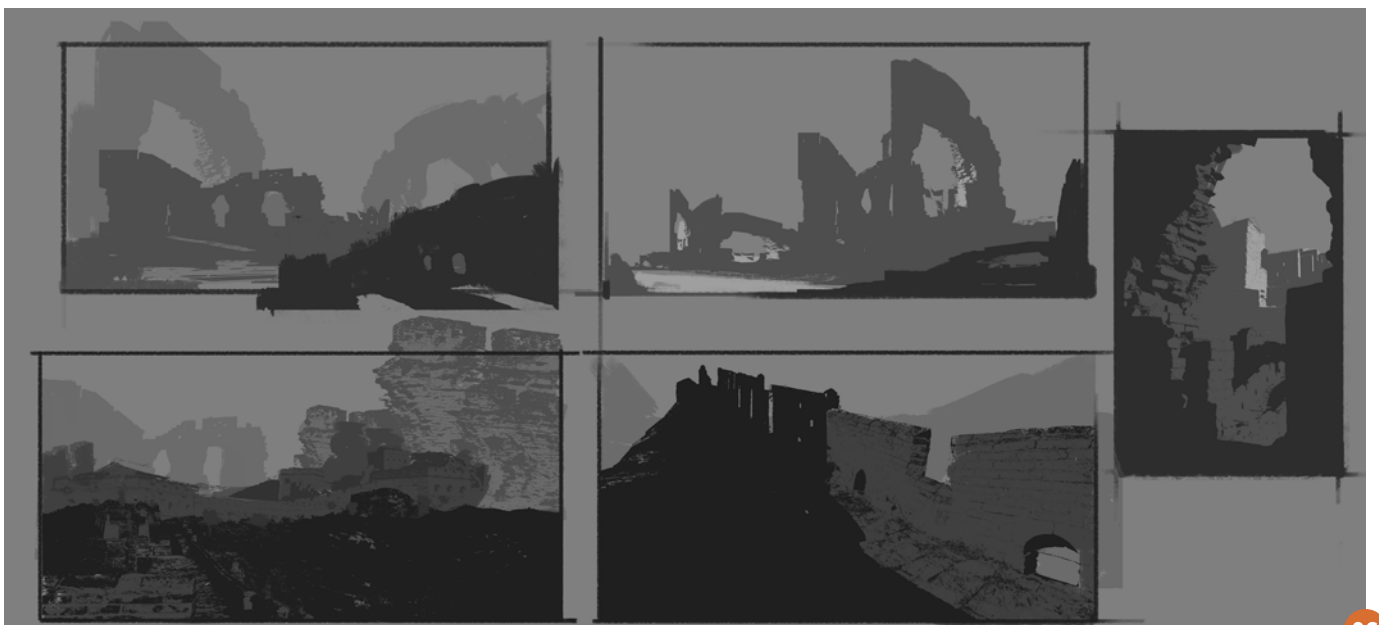
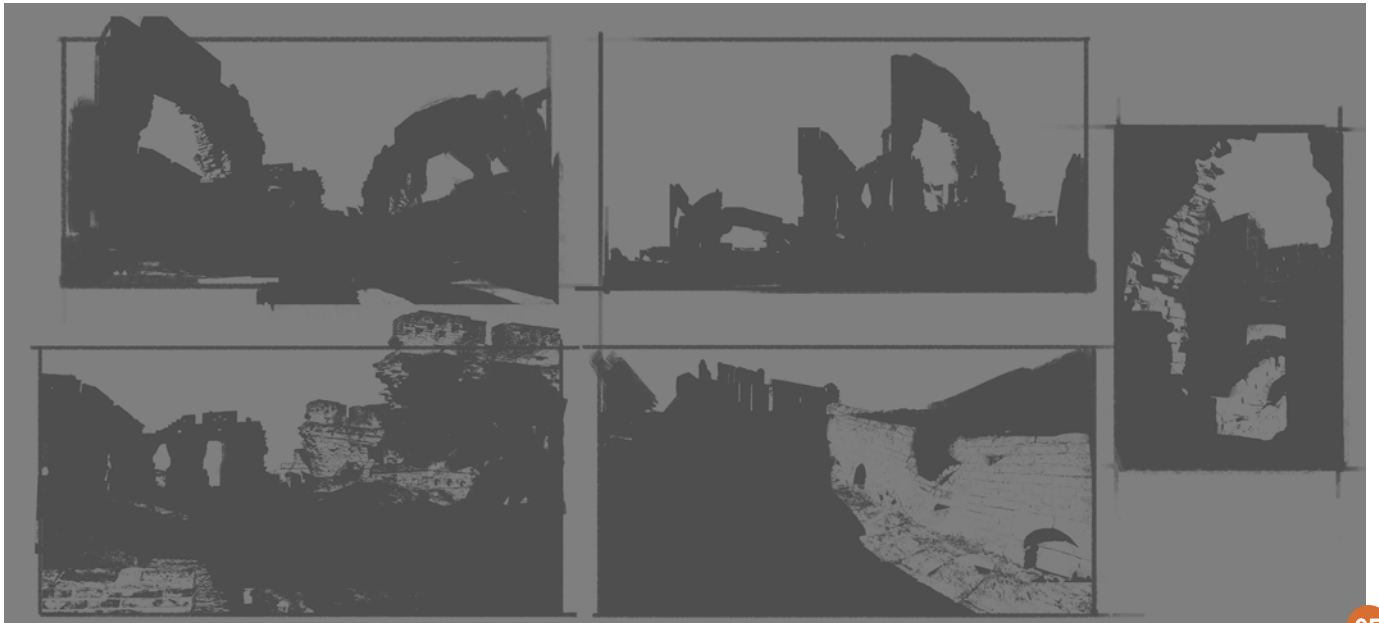


04c



04d





flexibility and the practicality of the use of the custom shapes keep this technique in the top list of my favorite painting techniques.

**05 Composition studies:** Now I have a small collection of the custom shapes that I have done with my initial shape selections. I drag them freely onto the canvas to see what interesting compositions I can come up with. Since the dragging can create a new aspect ratio of the original shape, you can think outside of the box while using the shapes. A stone wall can be stretched horizontally and be used as a ground texture. A tall tree can be dragged with much smaller proportions and be used as bushes. Another trick, you don't need to flip your shapes and create new custom shapes out of them. Instead, simply flip your canvas and drag them as you are used to.

**06 Value studies:** After working with shapes and a flat black color, I continue to bring more value nuances to the chosen composition studies. The depth and ambiance are worked out by using controlled values. Atmospheric depth is a key player in this step: when objects are closer to us, they have a higher level of contrast

compared to the objects that are far away from us. I also paint in some fog and humidity between the various shape layers in my Photoshop layers to tweak the spatial relationship within the image. Place your horizon line in a strategic way so the depth is not blocked at the foreground or the mid-ground. ►

**03 Shapes are the most effective synthesized visual language for the viewer to understand the image**

**04a To make a custom shape, select 'Make Work Path...'**

**04b Set the tolerance to 0.5 pixels**

**04c On the Edit menu select the 'Define Custom Shape...' option**

**04d The shape will now appear on the Custom Shape toolbar**

**05 Compositions are the foundation of your painting. Search for impressive camera angles and iconic compositions to give the viewers a strong first impression**

**06 Values come before the colors, because they are the key players of telling the spatial relationship within the image**



**“Constantly check your navigator window so you will always be aware if the overall thumbnail still holds up tightly”**

**07 Lighting reference gathering:** If the first pass of reference gathering is about the shapes, then this pass of reference studying is all about the lighting. Bear in mind the different lighting situations that you encounter in the studies: direct sunlight, overcast, sunset, night time, artificial light and back light.

The back lighting scenario is my favorite and this is also the one which can show off the shapes the best. I like to categorize all my lighting references on a big blank canvas and use it as my lighting board. This specific step forces you to study the lighting independently, separated from shapes, designs and colors.

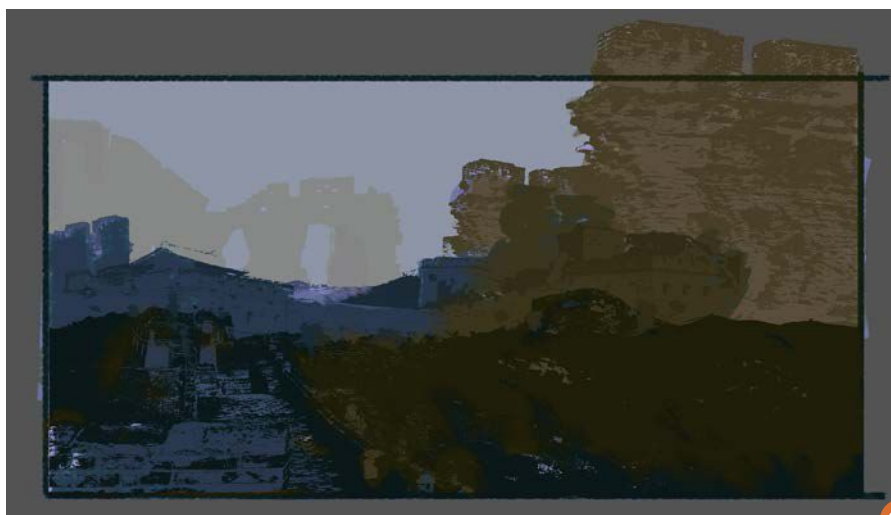
**08 Putting down colors:** Once the lighting is set, we can talk about color palette. Even though a lot of speed paintings use a monochromatic approach, I still like to have some subtle contrast in my color temperature. I like to use a warm color temperature for the areas where they receive light; and a cold color temperature in the shadow areas. Another advantage of using a nice color range in your painting is that it allows you to have the visual impression of a higher contrast level without going into the extreme dark and light grays.

**09 How to tweak colors effectively:** I have two frequently used ways to tweak my color palette. The first one is very straightforward; I simply try out different adjustment layers, such as Color Balance, Hue/Saturation and Photo Filter. The second one is more based on happy accidents. I first drag all the photo references that I like into Photoshop, then I select my painting and go to Image > Adjustment > Match Color. Once I am in the pop-up window, I go to the ‘Source’ drop-down menu and I go through all the photo references to see which ones would have a better color matching with my original painting. Use the sliders to have a better control of the luminance, color intensity and the fading level.

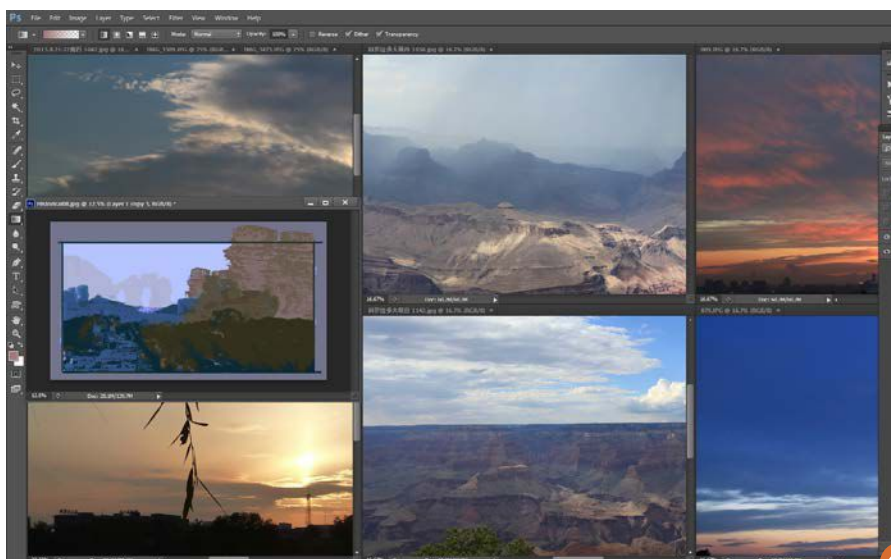
**10 Double check the values:** At this point, I would use the Black & White adjustment layer again to desaturate the whole painting to see if the values have been messed up. It happens a lot after playing with the coloring process and photo texture integration. The original value relationship could be disturbed by the added extra pixel information.



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The reason that I pay so much attention to the values is that the brain reads the grayscale values before the color information. If the grayscale is wrong, the colors won't help you to solve the depth inaccuracy.

**11 Adding details:** I use this step to add all the extra details: bird, tree branches, foreground vines, grass, cloud textures, and so on. I usually have a collection of custom brushes for adding those final details; they can save you



a significant amount of time. During this process, constantly check your navigator window so you will always be aware if the overall thumbnail still holds up tightly while adding all those details. I also use some photo texture to boost up the color nuance on large surfaces. Use the photo textures with subtlety so they don't mess up the value relationship that you have tried so hard to keep until now.

**12 Flip your canvas:** I flip my canvas to double-check my composition and this should be done through the whole painting process. Before the existence of Photoshop, the traditional painters would check their paintings in the mirror to have the images flipped. You may ask why go to so much trouble to flip the image? It is because after all the time you have spent looking at the painting, your brain is getting used to this visual representation, and trying to always make sense out of it. By flipping the canvas, it gives your brain a fresh view on the painting so you can analyze the image from a more objective point of view.

**13 Zoom blur:** I also like to use a subtle motion at the bottom of the image. It fakes the camera effect and adds more movement to the still image. For achieving this effect, go to the filter tab, select Blur, Radial Blur, set the amount to 10 and select the blur method to zoom. It makes all your image edges blur into the center of the image. In order to make this ►

- 07** A second pass of careful reference studying is essential, but this time it is more about lighting and colors than shapes
- 08** Try to have a nice range of cold and warm colors so you can give more visual vibrancy to your painting
- 09** Use different non-destructive methods such as adjustment layers and match color to refine the color palette of your painting
- 10** Double check your values just in case the added color information messed up the value relationship
- 11** By making a small collection of specific brushes you can speed up the process of adding details
- 12** Flipping the canvas frequently during the painting process can give your brain a fresh take on the image



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11



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effect subtle, I create a mask on the layer, erase the areas that I don't need and reduce the opacity to around 30%.

**14 Chromatic aberration:** I would also like to talk about the chromatic aberration, even though I prefer to use it for my sci-fi scenes instead of historical images, since such an effect is used to mimic the modern camera effect. To do so, you should go to Filter > Lens Correction, then go under the custom tab and play with the

three sliders in the chromatic aberration section. It allows you to offset the RGB channels to mimic the lens effect. I avoid moving the three channel sliders all at the same time, since they may cancel out each other's effect, thus making the effect much less apparent.

**15 Conclusion:** Now I am done with the painting. I will probably walk away from the image for few hours and back come to check if the whole image is still working well to suit



13

## The Artist



**Donglu Yu**  
[artofdonglu.wix.com/home](http://artofdonglu.wix.com/home)





my artistic tastes. For extra individual training, I would create a series of other speed paintings based on the reference studies and the custom shapes created for this specific theme. Practice makes perfect. I always tell my students not to have too much emotional attachment to their images. I would rather have them spending 10 hours on 10 different color sketches instead of spending 10 hours on one single image. I hope that you have learned a few tricks and a nice recipe to attack such complex scenes. ●



14



15





# 2d artist

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## The Artist



**Doug Lobo**

onelobo.com

**Software Used:**

Paint Tool Sai

Doug Lobo is a Brazilian visual artist who currently delivers artwork for tales magazines and fantasy literature book publishers as a freelancer.

# Painting an experimental scene

Visual artist Doug Lobo gives a step-by-step account of how he created his expressive image *Enantiodromia* in Paint Tool Sai ▶





## Pick up tips for working intuitively and effectively...

Most art students, if not all of them, have the urge to find their own voice; a particular way of expressing one's thoughts and ideals. My experience has taught me that it may not happen many times when working on client work or sample pieces for clients, which limits the way that images will be developed, often due to a market trend.

As such conditions are set on a daily basis, in the final space product starts to conquer over the creative process. No matter how refined the technique is it usually loses unity with the focus on the less important part of creation, which is the end. It doesn't mean that the final work does not have quality; it means that, as an effect, the process itself does not bring new intellectual content to the artist. There is no dialogue between creation and creator.

For this overview, I will present a more personal method for the development of a piece of mine, *Enantiodromia*, which is purely focused on the explorative process and the usage of one's intuition on a digital platform. I must point out that I am not a follower of any kind of formal creative process in specific, and that the next steps of mine should be used

## ⚡ PRO TIP Let it flow

Unconsciousness is always one step right before consciousness. It acts above us all the time. Every thought or movement comes after an unconscious orientation. When you think about something, the event has already occurred. As a pure act, without the corruption of rationalization, intuition may be the best weapon for creation. However, it is not about controlling it, but the acceptance of one's real nature. Pay attention to the signals.

just a reference for yours. It's not only about creating, but learning from the image you create; in other words, finding your own voice.

**01 Move yourself:** First of all, if you want to get anywhere, start moving! For this first step, I began with loose brushstrokes, applying any color pallet that suited my particular taste. You could do this in black-and-white as well. At the time this piece was created, I was not familiar with the baby blue color and that is why I chose it.

I always try to get surprised by the process and this requires unusual choices. Finding your personal voice is about putting yourself up to new experiences, asking questions you have not done before and changing your perspective on things.

**02 Contrast:** Following the same direction of thought, I kept exploring forms,

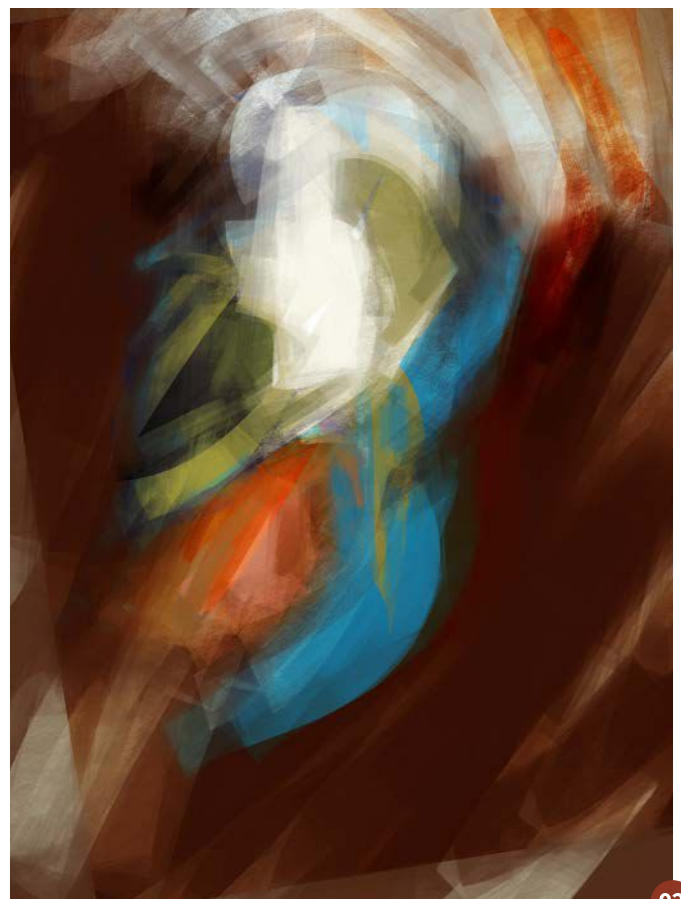
refining silhouettes and experimenting with new colors on the canvas. I am used to work with no more than two layers during these very early stages; the original one and a second layer for modes like Overlay. It forces me to deal with my choices and put me in a position of risking everything. Of course there is still the Ctrl+Z button, but remember that there were no computers in the Renaissance period and it helped to build the ground for a risky mindset. ▶

**01 Looking for the bases of complementary colors in the color wheel is always a good way to start**

**02 A few areas of interest were selected, copied and pasted. After that, Doug applied contrast effects and merged it back to the original layer**



01



02





03

**03 Mood:** I kept refining the edges and silhouettes until I started to visualize what I wanted to represent. I let my intuition work together with the appearing forms and was guided by it. With the body of knowledge acquired along your path, you find out what works better for your way of working. I feel that warm tones are closer to expressing my views than the cold ones, like a conductor for thoughts.

So I started giving mood to the piece. In this stage, I visualized half of the body with components around it that could easily turn into clothes. I also decided to remove the blue tones and re-applied it later, as a complement to the main tones.

**04 Textures:** Then comes the time to implement more visual information with photo textures from nature or whatever feels interesting. I did not think about utility, I just put it all in the canvas. Like life, it is a balance between quantity and refinement. Not only does your vision on the form deepen as you refine it; the more you add to the canvas, the more limited your choices are. I decided to keep the body idea and added something close to a green leg on its base. The direction of shapes around the focal point also helped to guide the viewer's eyes to it.

**05 Setting:** I refined the background. As the composition evolved, you must be aware of the interaction between ambiance and the main object. The ambiance (or its absence) defines the main object and the direction that the artwork will take.

At this stage, I started having some clarity in my view as a part of the concept became established. I added some more elements to the canvas, bringing the baby blue color back and giving contrast to the color pallet. I also used the shapes from what turned out to be the background to build the beginning of scenery.



04



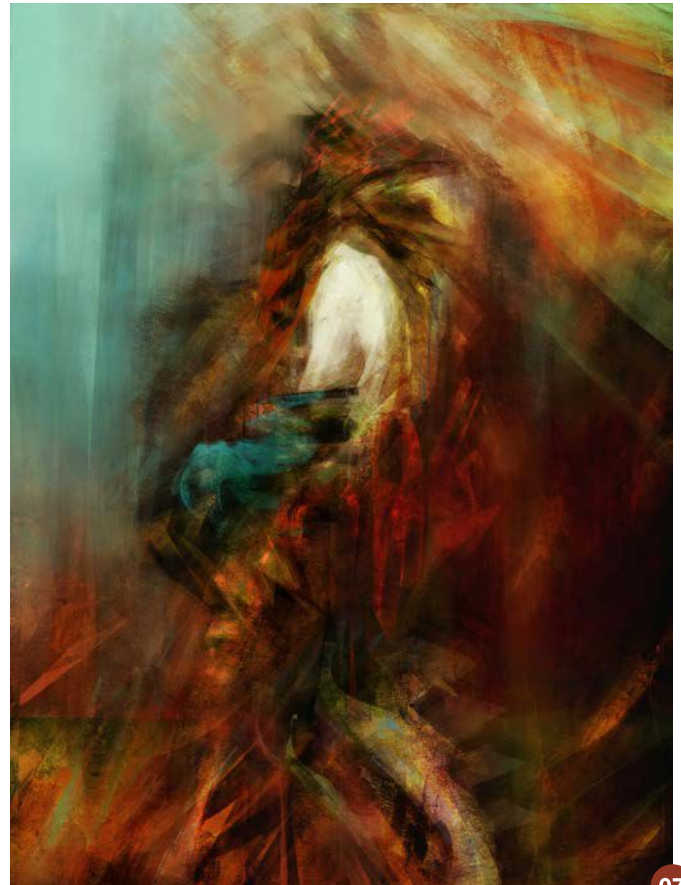
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**06 Depth:** It was time to evolve the values in some areas to give it volume and separate planes. I started with dark tones, but it would have been okay to go for the bright colors too. In this moment, I chose to keep the body lighter than the ambiance and to refine more of what could be seen as a head, adding information to the region. Also, I experimented with a modern haircut on the person as it emerged.



07

**07 Adding Layers:** There was now enough information to develop a vision on what the main object and the background were going to become. I decided to focus on the person for the next steps, refining the concept and the details on it.

I got bored with the haircut and, instead of erasing it; my choice was to blur it a bit. As you

paint over past decisions, more layers are merged to it. New forms were applied to the accessories and drapery and I thought that it would be interesting to add an element of contrast to the warm colors, using some cold tones over it.

**08 Design from your experiences:** Life's experiences scream through your ►

## ⚡ PRO TIP

### Do not attach yourself

A pure act must not follow any kind of fear or desire, though we are also not capable of reaching such a state during all of the process, due to the opposite forces of our critical thinking apparatus. Whichever path is being followed, it is necessary to fight such forces. This allows the viewer to reach the same mental condition from where memories are chained to emotions, and imagination rises while exploring the object.



- 03** Doug applied more tones and contrasts to the main areas and used an overlay mode layer with brushstrokes to refine the mood
- 04** Forms were refined and elements were added to the main silhouette
- 05** Details on the main object were refined. Doug played with the color pallet contrast and added elements to the background
- 06** Dark tones were embedded for volume and profundity. Doug added details to the head and chest regions
- 07** Adding forms to the person and re-adjusting tone combinations to refine the concept





08

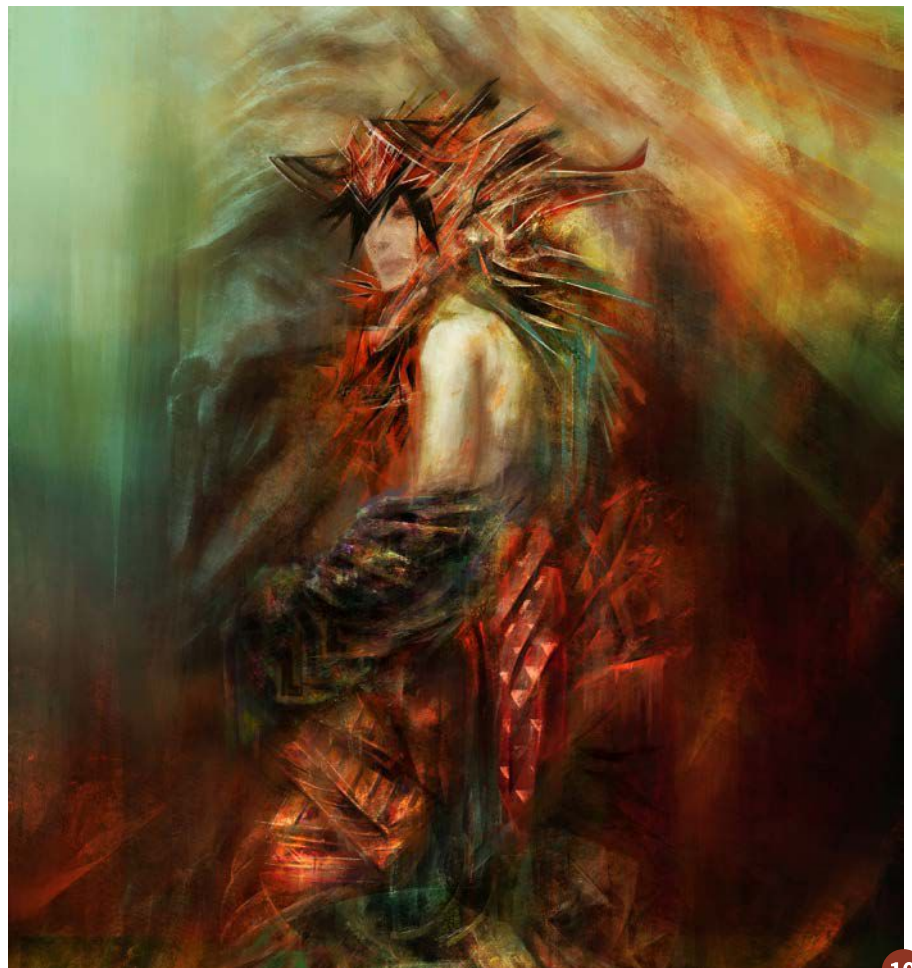


09

**“I try to control the movement of things as little as possible. Mistakes are always welcome”**

expression without you noticing! I have always been amazed by oriental culture, and I also lived in Japan a few years ago. It has deeply influenced the direction of my choices and the way I think on design. I added details that would turn the visual information from the silhouette into a kimono-like based costume. I also wanted to give a feeling of the sci-fi genre to the piece, so I added details to the head as if it would become a Samurai helmet while starting the face's rendering. I also visualized something like a mecha in the background and gave it a few shapes and mood.

**09 Subjectivity:** For this step I embedded more details from traditional kimonos to the costume design and also explored the basis of the piece a bit more. I added bright tones to it and also started defining the mecha's silhouette with lights too. It is important to point out that I was not interested in how the lights actually worked in reality. I was focused on the exploration of the concept and I made use of a few lighting techniques, but everything keeps being subjective in my way of visualizing things. I try to control the movement of things as little as possible. Mistakes are always welcome.



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**10 Sharpening edges:** The planes needed to be better separated in this step, since the main object was still merged to the scenery. I lightened a few areas on the person and refined its helmet even more. This time, I decided to make use of hard shapes and bright lines with shadows under it, to contrast and to bring the head area out from the background. I also wanted to express ephemerality and added a few small falling fragments to her back.

**11 Cutting spaces:** Following such subjective methods of creation allowed me to reflect about my relation with the world and even about my personality. In this stage, I found out there was a big and useless space in my composition that could be cut off so the main object would gain importance.

I also appreciate well utilized spaces and found no motives to keep all that emptiness surrounding the person. Not only that, but I also focused the light on the base and added bright

shapes to the helmet. The mecha also had some addition of shapes with a reduction of saturation.

**12 Exploring relations:** The main object was well refined by this time. I always leave the face to the final moment in the process, once there is something in a blurry face's conception that attracts me. I decided to focus on the mecha development and added elements with forms that would communicate with the main object's design.

I wanted to build a connection between both and, at the same time, create a counterpoint. This would be reflected in the choice of cold tones in relation to the person's warm color pallet.

**13 Renewing concepts:** By the time I finished adding elements to the mecha, I had started getting bored with it and felt that the composition was stifled. As I said before, I do not usually erase things, instead, I paint over, so new layers are implemented. ►



12

**08** Design details were refined with light. A few areas got its values re-adjusted for a better plane separation

**09** Doug lit up a few shapes in the background to define the mecha's silhouette, and refined the person's visual information

**10** Bright and cold tones were added to separate planes. New shapes with sharp edges were incremented to the design in the head area

**11** The image was resized for a matter of composition, giving focus to the person. Doug lightened the base and added elements to the mecha design

**12** The mecha design was refined and a connection and counterpoint were built with the main object





13

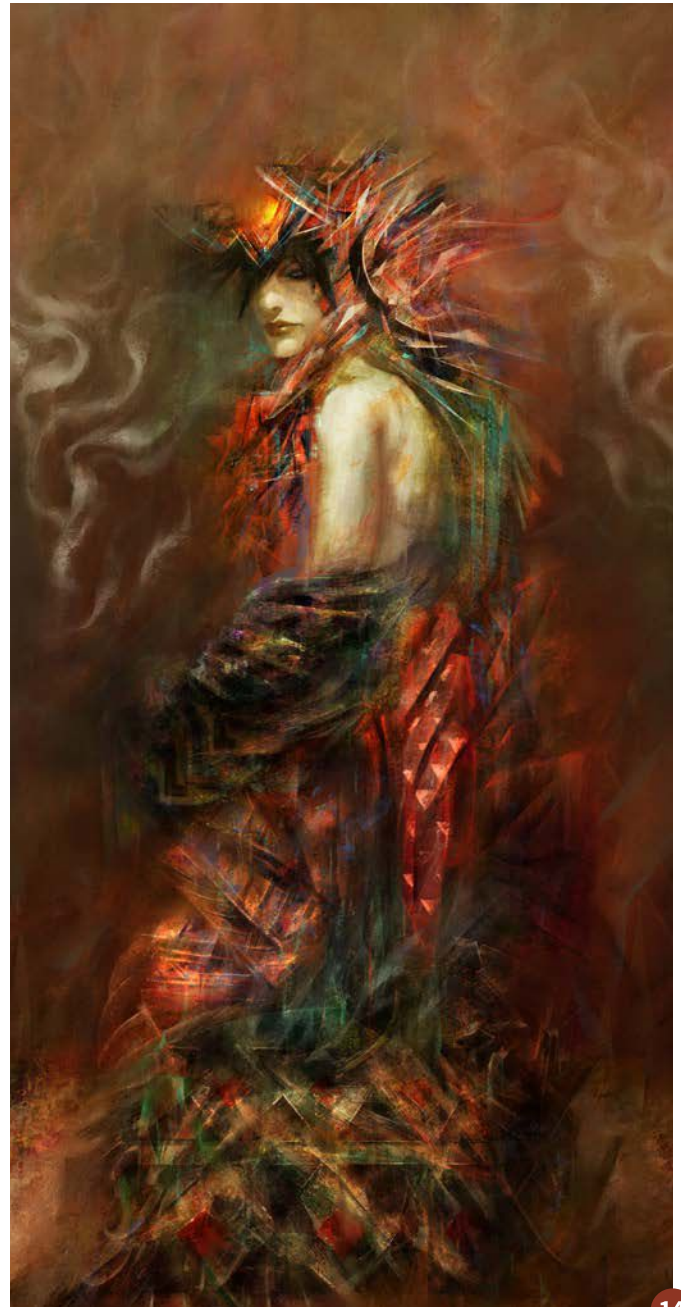
**“I felt the overall color pallet was too muted, so I added bright tones to it while applying textures as a complement to the piece’s visual information”**

It is always a struggle to paint over extensive areas like this, but it is also the only way I know to refresh a piece that is getting dead. I always force myself to come up with new, interesting solutions in such situations. After all, I decided to keep cold tones just as a complement and preserved a bit of the visual information found in the background.

**14** **Resort to intuition:** After the paint-over, I used the preserved visual information in the background to generate a new

concept. I felt the person needed to dialogue with something, no matter how subjective such a connection would be. With a few moments of exploration, the new thing started to be sculpted from the background, revealing itself to me as a new entity or a non-comprehensible kind of existence that would make a counterpoint to the main object. I also painted the face, adding a focal point to the head. Values were adjusted in a few areas of the second plane to keep it away from the person.

**15** **Final touches:** I felt the overall color pallet was too muted, so I added bright tones to it while applying textures as a complement to the piece’s visual information. The face started to bore me, so I blurred it a bit. This helped to express the sense of ephemerality



14

I was looking for. The silhouette of the chest got a small re-adjustment as well.

In the end, I came up with the name for this piece inspired by one of Carl Jung’s concepts, as this piece made me reflect about the impermanence of things. Enantiodromia: The tendency to change into opposites. ●

**13** A radical choice was made and Doug painted over the mecha without looking back in order to refresh the final concept

**14** Addition of concepts, development of the anatomy and adjustments in the second plane’s values



## The Artist

---



**Doug Lobo**  
onelobo.com





## The Artist



**José Julián  
Londoño Calle**

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**Software Used:**  
Photoshop

José Julián Londoño Calle is a graphic designer and university lecturer. His projects include work for Xbox One, PS4, and educational videogames for the Ministry of Education, Columbia.

# Quickly create roman ruins

Learn how to build up an image in only a few hours by layering references and textures in this handy guide from José Julián Londoño Calle ▶









## Pick up tips to speed up your working methods...

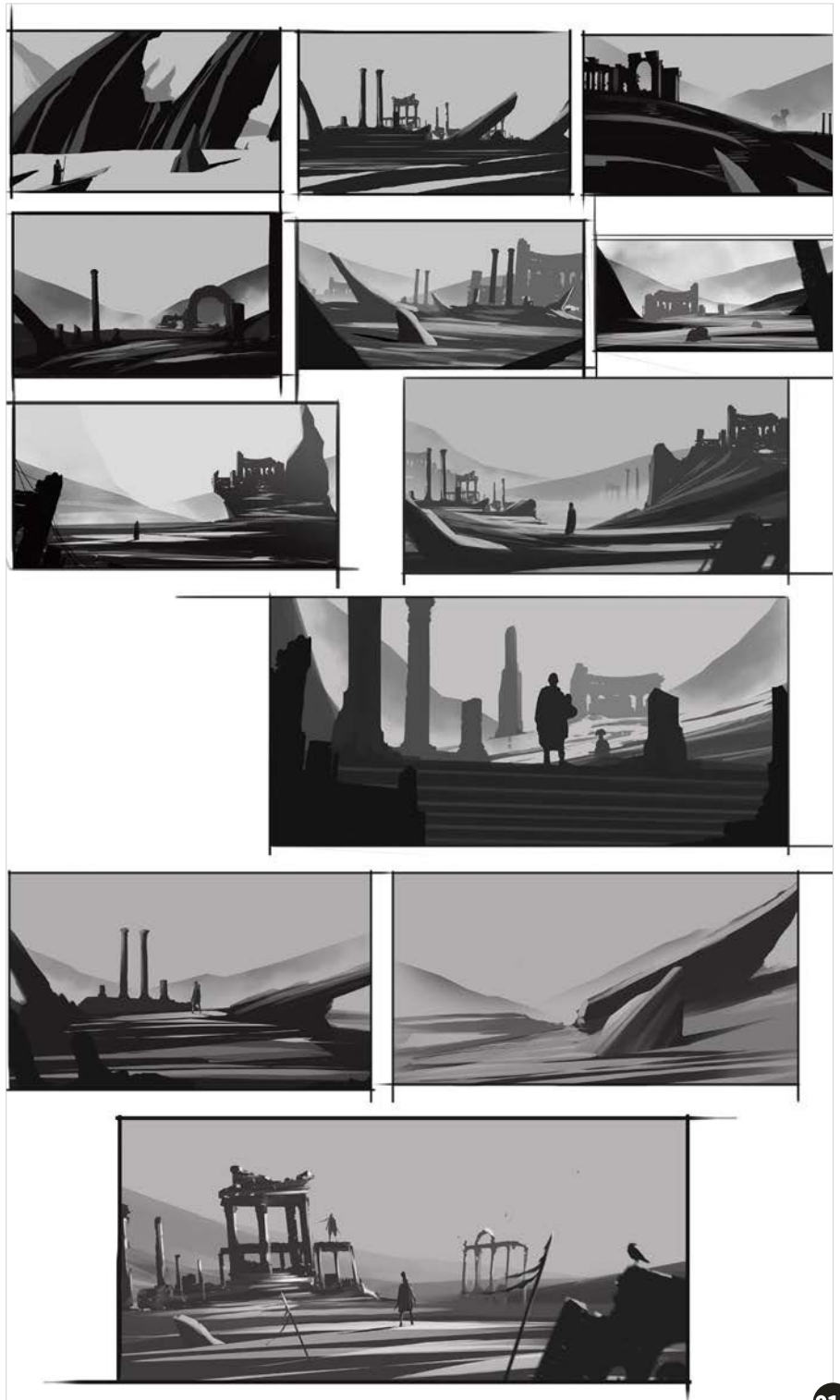
The concept of this image, *Roman ruins*, was an historic scene of abandoned ruins where the stages of development was the priority. This work was the result of a class of only three hours long where the main focus was the composition of the image. Using the techniques that I have used in this project, I have learned to solve many problems of design. This project overview shows an exercise with which you can make sketches of good quality in only two hours.

In this overview I will start by showing how I observed photos and real references of Roman constructions to compose a completely new scene. During this process I will also show you how I start an exploration graph and create sketches thinking of the lighting before painting a scene.

**01 Graphically explore sketches:** Observing different reference images, I started by constructing some simple sketches with compact forms, completely using only one flat tone.

I took a brush with irregular angles that allowed me to play with the forms and create a base from which these forms would be born. I created shapes thinking in depth. Taking different grays, I used the Lasso tool to select different sectors where I painted with the lighter tone looking for trace roads. Thinking of the point with a focal range of light, I drew on the structures with a light shade on the surfaces that I wanted to highlight, this gave detail to the sketch.

**02 Creating the scene in line:** Generating three leak points created a perspective for drawing the elements in. I built boxes that would help me create the composition. This method is closer to what we see in the real world, but the vertical distortion is hardly perceptible, and for this reason two vanishing points are normally used.

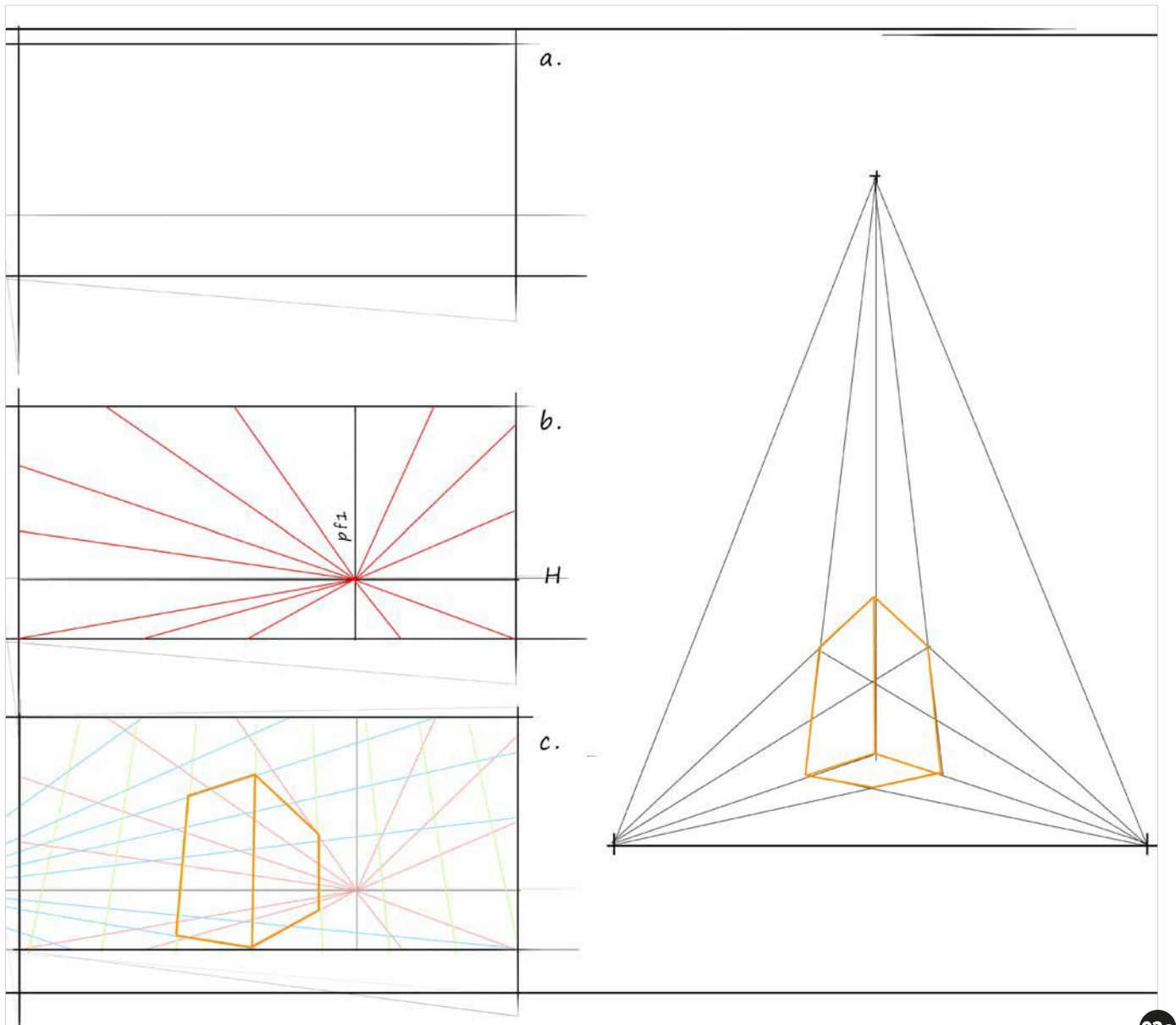


01a



01b

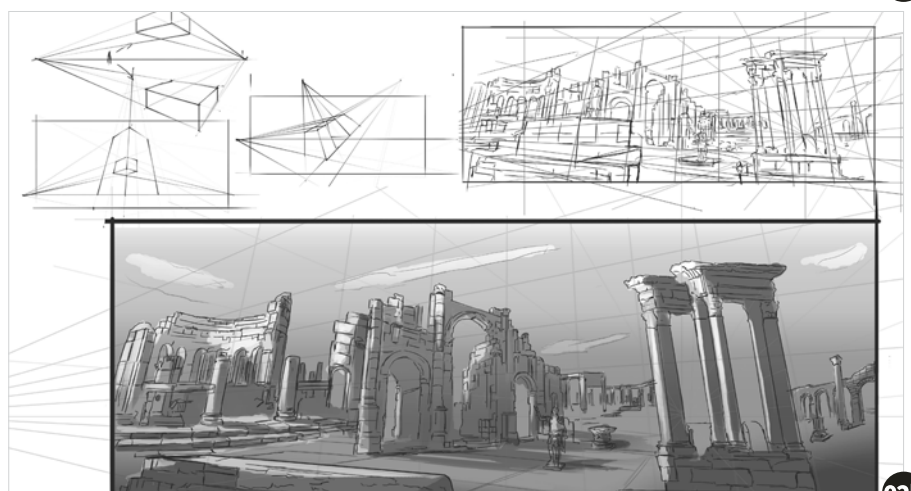




02a

First I drew a horizon line, then added a point of internal leak along the horizon line. To this I added an external leakage and finally a superior leakage point (Fig. 2a).

**03 Creating the background:** I began creating the background by selecting a photo to paint using brush history and normal brush. In this case I looked for a sky that generated the sensation of depth that I wanted. The image I chose has several layers of cloud to give the sky depth. ►



02b

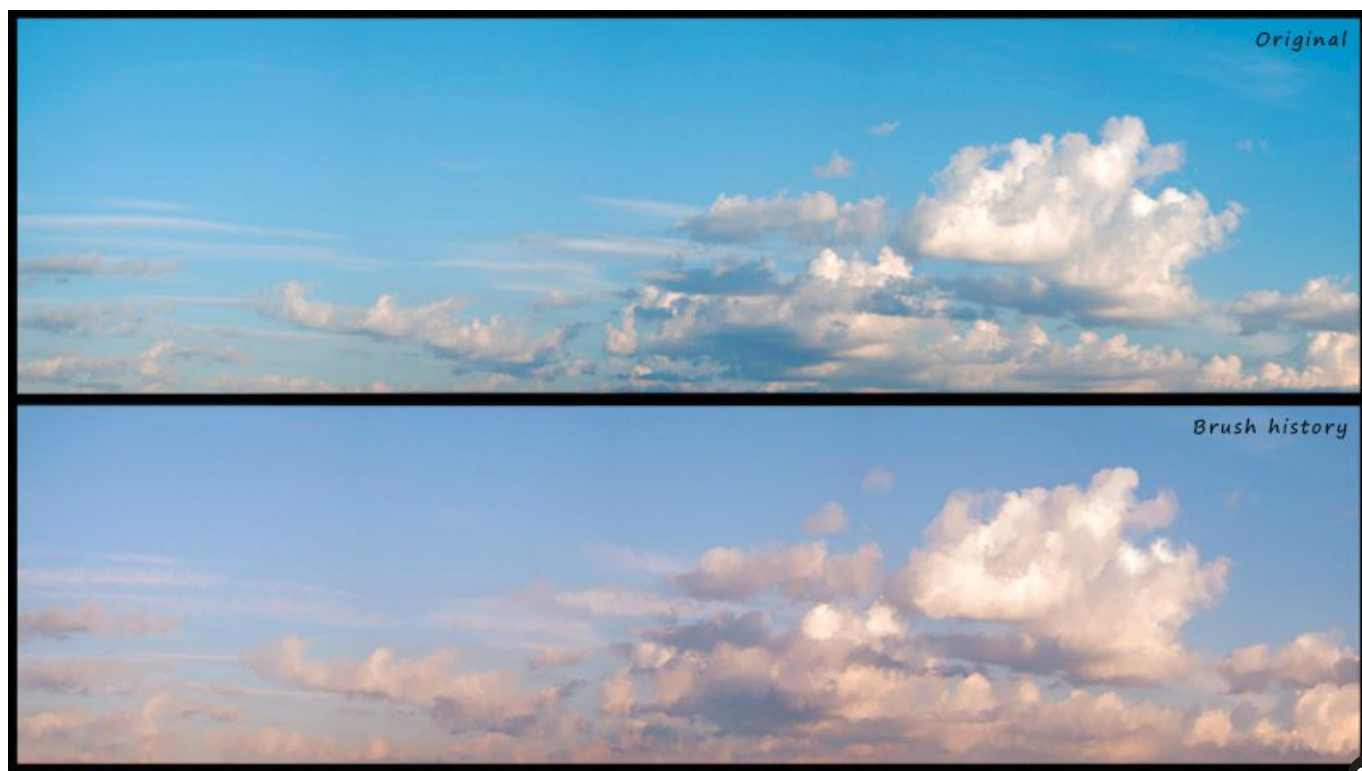
**01a** This process was repeated several times with a variety of compositions

**01b** Thumbnail sketches were created using simple shapes and gray tones

**02a** From a-c: The horizon line, point of internal leak, external leakage point, and superior leakage point

**02b** José cleaned the line and clarified the forms to get a better idea of the concept







I worked on the image with the brush history duplicated because I didn't want the image to lose hyper-realistic details. The brush lines created a more artistic tracing of the photographic cloud.

**04 Creating the ground:** To create the ground I doubled the sky and reflected it, applying a Motion Blur to create a field that generates depth. With the Lasso tool, I selected to create mountains and details at the background of the concept, and took the tones of the sky to create these elements. The background elements are silhouettes and do not have details; these elements are only decorative.

**05 Creating the fun with details:** I continued to add texture details on the ground to create the atmosphere necessary for the concept. I then used the tool Levels to balance the different textures so that they adhered to the concept, and applied color layers with a square brush with jagged edges.

**06 Creating the mid-plane:** The mid-plane was the most important element of the composition, save for the details, and this is where the action of the story is placed.

I focused on creating a structure that would provide a basis for allocating the other elements and controlling their depth. This object gave me the proportions of others and I always had in mind the perspective to accommodate textures without losing the leak points.

**07 Details and reflection:** I started to add other objects to the composition taking into account the perspective and balance of color, and considering where the shadows would fall by taking into account the light. ►

**03** Always save the original image, as this will optimize your time

**04** Doubling and reflecting the sky creates a field that generates depth

**05** Keep the blue tone of the sky in the whole concept

**06** This object gives a focus for the light to define the position of the shadows

**07a** Use reflective details to add depth to the concept

**07b** Add to the objects to build up the scene



06

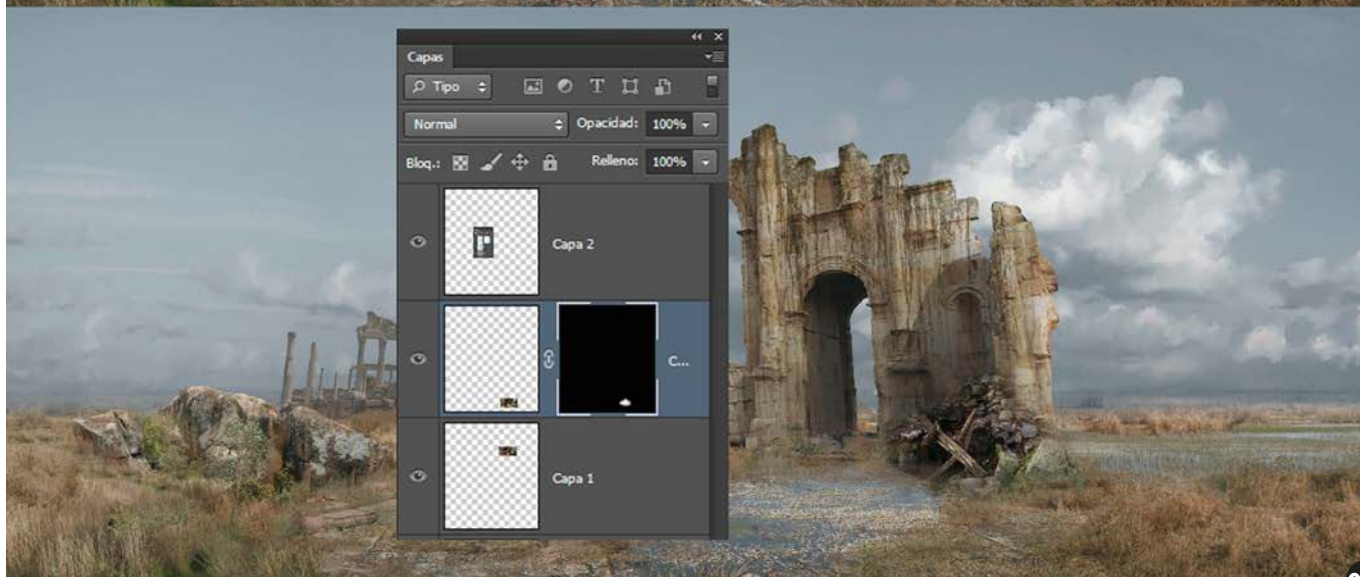
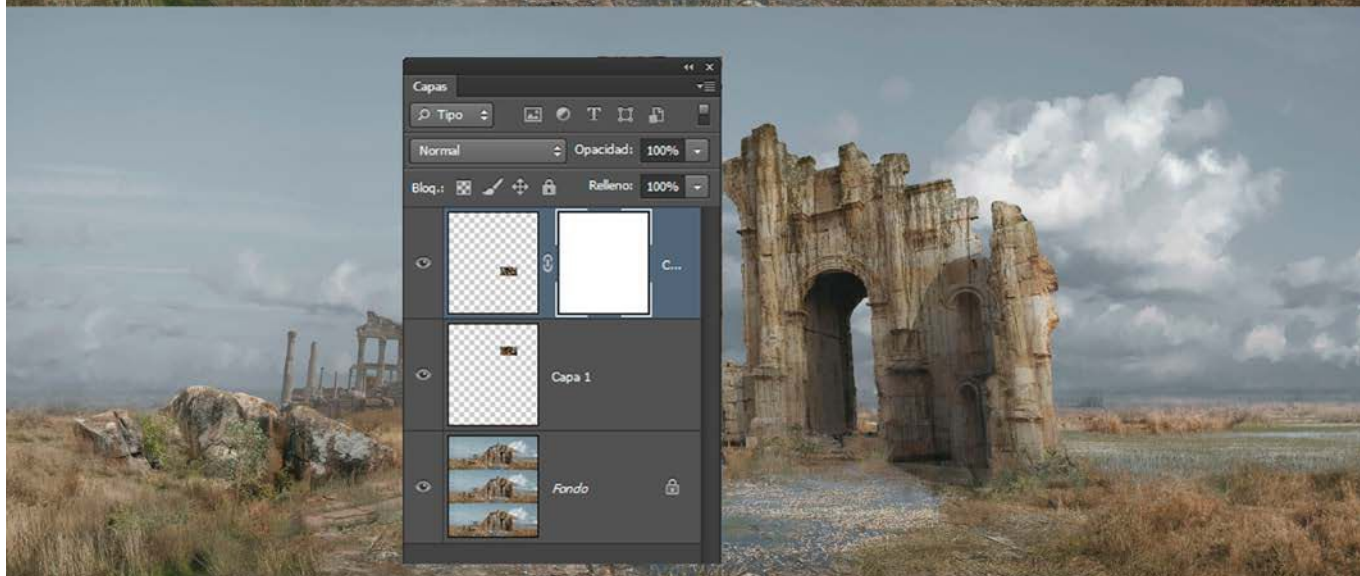


07a



07b





The textures used were chosen for their colors so that they would be well integrated into the concept. To make the reflection depth a part of the concept, I copied it and with the Transform tool and then I transformed it so that it occupied

its correct position. To improve the reflection, I used the Eraser tool to integrate it.

**08** Curving and merging textures: Generating the curve of the sky helps

to earn interest in the composition, and better defines the approach I wanted in the concept. To achieve this I selected the layer of the sky with the Transform tool and use the Deform setting of the Transform panel.





08b



09

The technique used to merge the textures is divided into three stages.

First I selected the texture that I wanted to add and then masked that layer. Then I added a black color to the masked layer. Lastly, I used a white color on the mask to help discover the texture. This technique merges better the color between the textures.

**09 Final render:** For this final stage I put extra details, characters and plants in the foreground that created the story for me. To close the process I combined all the layers and matched the brush history and the normal brush. This gave me a beautiful artistic result based on improvisation. This painting is a sample of how quickly a concept or scenario can be created to give ideas on the project. ●

**08a** Merge textures by masking the layer, then add black and white to help merge the color between the textures

**08b** The details of birds and flags help to recreate the history behind the concept

**09** The final result is based on improvisation



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Ruinas Romanas - José Julián Londoño Calle - Class Demo





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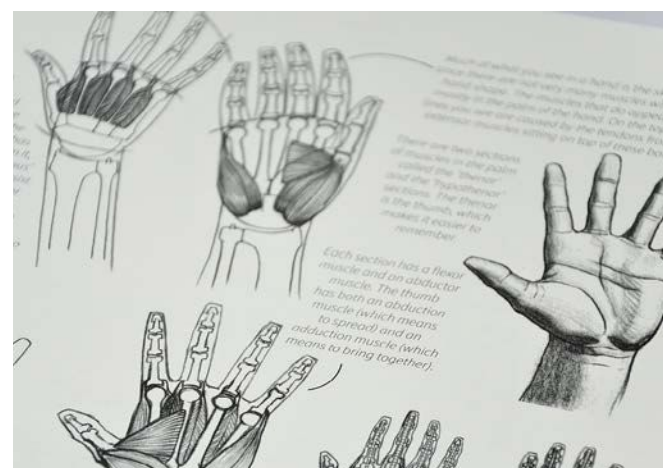
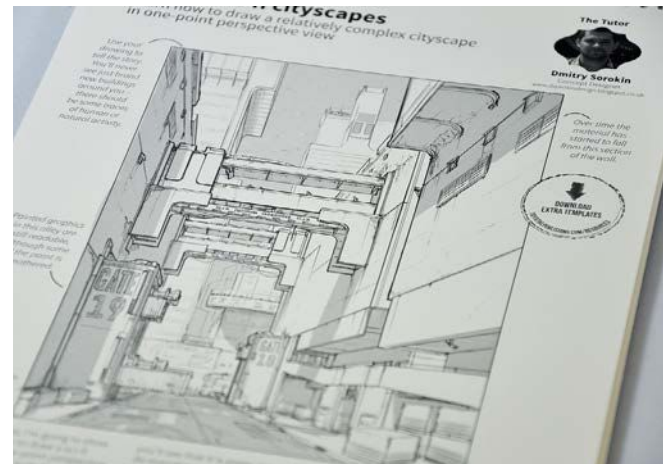
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# In retrospect, not a good idea

by Guillaume Ospital

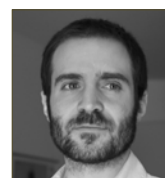
See how master illustrator Guillaume Ospital created his bright image

*In retrospect, not a good idea* in this sneak chapter from *Digital Art Masters Vol. 9* ▶





## The Artist



**Guillaume Ospital**  
cakeordeath.fr

**Software Used:**  
Photoshop

Guillaume Ospital is a lead 3D modeler and character designer working in the animation industry. He also takes on some freelance work creating illustrations for games, books, magazines and commercials.



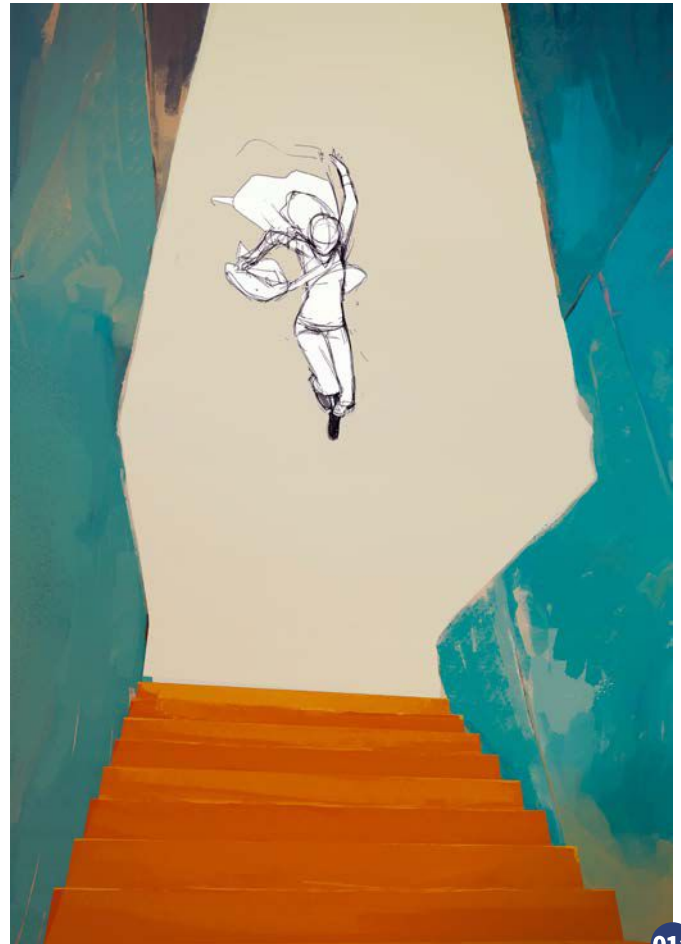
*In retrospect, not a good idea* is part of a small personal project I've been working on for some time now. It tells the story of a young woman on a journey in a seemingly empty world. Along the way, she stumbles upon the remains of a huge industrial complex, where this scene takes place. The illustration, among several others, was made very early in the development process, with a few goals in mind.

First, I was trying to figure out the style of rendering I wanted to achieve with the backgrounds. Sharp and simple shapes, vibrant colors and hard lighting. I also wanted to find a way to quickly and efficiently paint a ton of them in a very short time, using techniques picked up from my years working in the 3D animation industry. This would allow me to focus on actually making illustrations, and not struggling with the usual technical hurdles.

#### The setting & composition

When starting a new illustration, the first step is to quickly commit the initial idea to paper (or in this case, Photoshop) by drawing a series of quick, rough sketches. I usually spend a couple of minutes on each of these, trying to keep things extremely broad and simple. No elaborate lighting or details; I'm restricting myself to lines, shapes and a few colors picked from a controlled palette consisting of a dozen hues. There is no point in controlling anything at this stage. Things need to be as loose and free as possible.

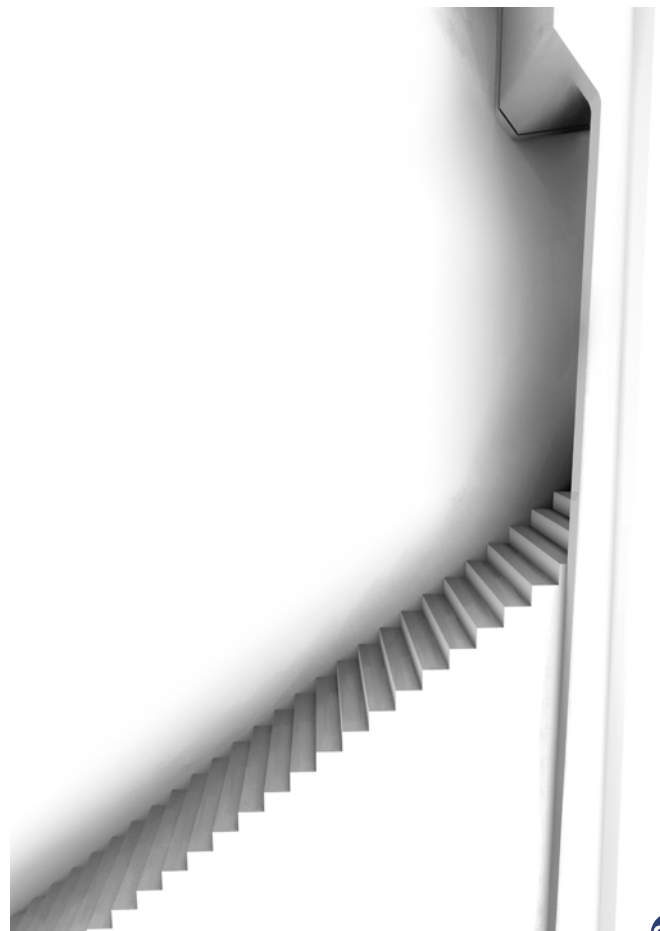
The only important aspects are the composition and colors. Ultimately, any illustration can be broken down into masses and empty spaces that work together or against each other to achieve the final result. The colors should be used to emphasize the composition further. That was especially important with this illustration since I didn't have a lot of depth to help separate the different elements.



01a



01b



02a



### Building the background

Instead of drawing and painting my background all at once – as I would usually do – I decided to create separate passes: the colors, ambient occlusion and shadows. I would then composite them together to achieve the final result. Hopefully, separating the volume rendering from the actual color work would make things faster and easier to manipulate.

Working on top of a grayscale version of the rough sketch, I started painting the Ambient Occlusion to define more precisely the actual shape of the stairs. I used a mix of polygonal selections, broad textured brushes and some softer ones. I then added noise on top of it, to achieve the grainy look of an ambient occlusion pass with a low samples value.

I went back to the initial rough to work on the colors and texture, using the ambient occlusion as a guideline. Since the occlusion pass defined the shape of the stairs, I didn't have to zoom in and paint things too precisely and could instead concentrate on the overall result.

### Refining the girl

The initial sketch was pretty rough, only hinting at the girl's design and pose. While cleaning and refining it, I tried to stay as zoomed out as possible to keep the overall shape and dynamics of the character in mind. Working on a reduced canvas prevents the temptation to render tiny details and helps focus on the general attitude. Ultimately, it keeps the design from becoming too crowded too soon, as well as resulting in a more homogenous and solid line. ▶



**01a** The first idea was not bad, but it lacked a sense of heights. It was reused for another illustration

**01b** The camera angle here is a bit boring, but I liked the composition and the character flying over the steps

**02a** The ambient occlusion roughly mimics Global Illumination. It's basically an approximation of the way light radiates in a scene

**02b** The color pass is similar to the initial rough. Not bothering with volumes made this step really fast and intuitive

**02c** While working on the color pass, keep a cloned window on a second screen with the ambient occlusion applied to check the result







03a



03b

The girl was meant to feel very 2D-ish compared to the background. That contrast was emphasized further by choosing colors that would make it pop on the blue-ish background wall.

Throughout this part of the process, I constantly flipped my image horizontally, reversing my perception of the character, to prevent from being affected by the left/right-hand bias. A drawing can look perfectly fine, but after flipping it, some proportional mistakes and crooked body parts become painfully obvious.

#### Compositing, final details and color correction

The final step consisted of mixing the different passes together and adding details such as scrapped painting to make the illustration livelier. It was the only time where I really zoomed in to paint. Starting with broad strokes and waiting a bit before diving into more precise work allowed me to better control the amount and flow of details in the image.

Having both the background and the girl on the same canvas also meant that I could tie everything together by adding directional lighting and shadows.

Now to the fun part: I added some vignetting to focus the viewer's eyes on the center of the composition and played with color correction layers to add some saturation and further darken or tint several areas. I also colored my ambient occlusion and shadow passes a bit, to prevent them from graying the image too much. At this point, I also try to keep the initial intention in mind to prevent from altering it too much (with color shifting, for example).

#### Changing my process

Working the lighting and shading aspects



04a

separately from colors is something I have been doing for years on my characters, but up until this point I had never tried it on backgrounds.

I usually prefer to paint everything at once instead of breaking down my scenes into several parts, and this was my first attempt at changing my process. All in all, it made some steps a lot easier to achieve, and perhaps more importantly, a lot easier to modify and transform.

It's a balancing act: on the one hand, things need to be more structured from the start, thus losing some freedom, but on the other hand, I have more room to alter specific bits of the illustration when everything falls into place at the end.

Since then I have made several other illustrations using the same process, hopefully achieving a more consistent look over the whole project. The reception so far has been great. ●



04b

**03a** Staying zoomed out and working with long, loose brushstrokes helped keep the overall dynamics of the character

**03b** The coloring was made on top of the background, picking and altering colors from the orange stairs

**04a** The different passes mixed together with the character. Everything still looked a bit rough but I was happy with the colors

**04b** Painting in details and shadows was quite easy and seamless. Overdoing it is the only threat at this point



## The Artist



**Guillaume Ospital**  
cakeordeath.fr







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